三国志 ⑳

横山光輝

凶馬と玄徳

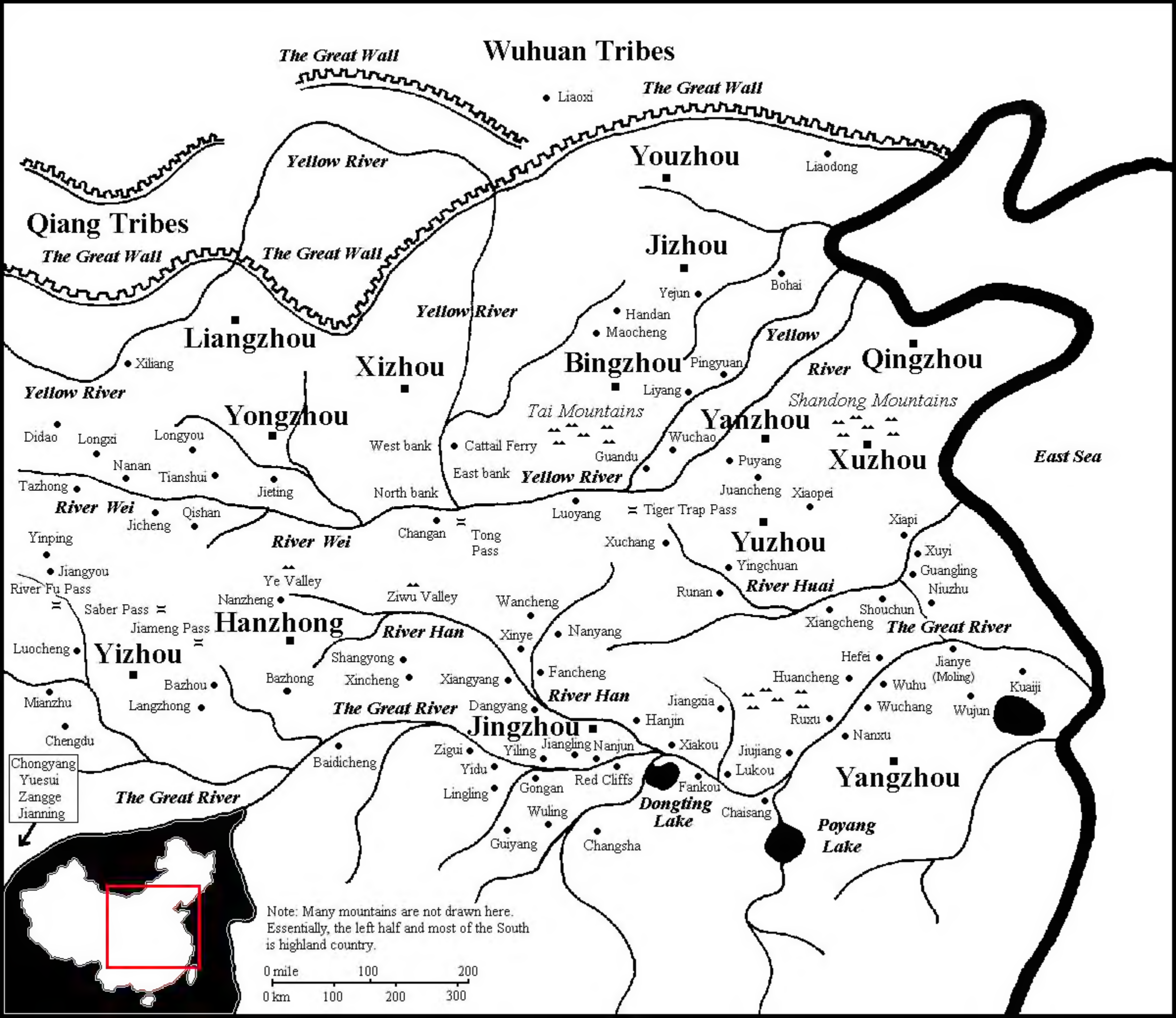
希望コミックス72

SANGOKUSHI

20

LIU BEI AND THE HEX MARKED HORSE

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU


Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS

PART 1: CHARACTERS TO KEEP IN MIND

CAO CAO MENGDE:
THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIABELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. AFTER RESCUING EMPEROR XIAN FROM LI JUE AND GUO SI, HE HAS TAKEN CONTROL OF THE IMPERIAL COURT AND BECOME CHANCELLOR OF HAN. HE IS CURRENTLY AT WAR WITH YUAN SHAO.

CHEN DENG:
THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU'S SUBORDINATE. HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CHEN GUI:
FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL. DESPITE SECRETLY WORKING TOGETHER WITH LIU BEI AGAINST CAO CAO, CAO CAO SPARES HIS LIFE AND ALLOWS HIM TO CONTINUE LIVING IN XUZHOU.

CHENG GONG:
A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH HIM AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. IN VOLUME 14, HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH LU BU.

EMPRESS HE:
ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS WHO THEN PRESENTED HER TO EMPEROR LING. SHE SOON BECAME EMPEROR LING'S FAVOURITE CONSORT AND GAVE BIRTH TO PRINCE LIU BIAN. HOWEVER, SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER AND KILLED BY LI RU WHEN DONG ZHUO CAME TO POWER.

DIAN WEI:
CAO CAO'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME, "E LAI," IN REFERENCE TO THE MIGHT GENERAL OF THE SAME NAME WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU OF SHANG. IN VOLUME 12, HE WAS KILLED DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO.

DIAO CHAN:
A SLAVE GIRL OF WANG YUN, WHO RAISED HER AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO BY HAVING HER SEDUCE BOTH MEN. IN VOLUME 8, SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL.

DONG CHENG:
ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN WHO IS EMPEROR XIAN'S CONFIDANT. EMPEROR XIAN SECRETELY ASKS HIM TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO, WHO NOW RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT AS CHANCELLOR. IN VOLUME 17, HE IS EXECUTED AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION PLOT IS FOUND OUT BY CAO CAO.

DONG ZHUO:
GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZED CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATED HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, BECOMING AN INFAMOUS TYRANT. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

GONGSUN ZAN:
GOVERNOR OF BEIPING AND FRIEND TO LIU BEI. HE WAGES WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO AFTER THE LATTER TRICKS HIM AND KILLS HIS YOUNG BROTHER. IN VOLUME 15, YUAN SHAO'S ARMY CONQUERS BEIPING, CAUSING GONGSUN ZAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:
SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. HE IS AS FIERCE AS GUAN YU BUT IS MORE RESTRAINED AND CALM IN HIS MANNERISMS.

GUO JIA:
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO.

JIA XU:
THE SHREWD STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO ZHANG XIU. HE AND ZHANG XIU PLOTS A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO, BUT SUCCEEDS IN KILLING DIAN WEI. IN VOLUME 16, HE AND ZHANG XIU DEFECT TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.

LI RU:
CUNNING ADVISOR TO DONG ZHUO. WITH HIS ADVICE, DONG ZHUO FIRMLY SECURES HIS SEAT AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH DONG ZHUO WHEN LU BU REBELS.

LIU BEI XUANDE:
THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. A KIND AND VIRTUOUS MAN, SAID TO BE THE DESCENDANT OF EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI. AFTER LOSING XUZHOU TO CAO CAO, HE IS CURRENTLY WORKING WITH YUAN SHAO TO BRING DOWN CAO CAO.

LIU BIAO:
THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU WHO, ALONG WITH YUAN SHAO, TRIED TO RECOVER THE IMPERIAL SEAL THAT SUN JIAN STOLE.

LIU XIE (EMPEROR XIAN OF HAN):
FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE OF CHENLIU, HE IS THE CURRENT EMPEROR OF HAN. HE BECAME THE EMPEROR WHEN DONG ZHUO FORCIBLY DETHRONED HIS HALF-BROTHER LIU BIAN.

LU BU:
HE IS SAID TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR IN THE LAND WHO RIDES ON THE FASTEST HORSE IN THE LAND, THE RED HARE. IN VOLUME 14, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES (HOU CHENG, WEI XU, SONG XIAN), WHO HANDED HIM OVER TO CAO CAO. HE BEGS CAO CAO FOR MERCY BUT IS EXECUTED DUE TO LIU BEI'S DISAGREEMENT.

MA TENG:
GOVERNOR OF XILIAN AND FATHER OF MA CHAO. UNLIKE THE ACTUAL HISTORICAL FIGURE, HE IS DEPICTED AS A HAN LOYALIST WHO SIGNS DONG CHENG'S BLOOD SEAL PLEDGE.

SUN CE:
ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN. IN VOLUME 19, ASSASSINS MAKE A FAILED ATTEMPT AT HIS LIFE, BUT SUCCEEDS IN SEVERELY WEAKENING HIM. HIS HEALTH DECLINES FURTHER AS HE IS DRIVEN MAD BY THE SPIRIT OF YU JI, WHICH EVENTUALLY LEADS TO HIS DEATH.

SUN JIAN:
BORN IN WU COMMANDERY, HE WAS THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA. IN VOLUME 5, HE PARTICIPATES IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. DURING THIS PERIOD, HE FINDS THE IMPERIAL SEAL, WHICH CAUSES YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO TO TURN ON HIM. IN VOLUME 7, HE TRIES TO EXACT HIS REVENGE ON LIU BIAO, ONLY TO BE KILLED IN BATTLED.

SUN QUAN:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE. AS OF THE END OF VOLUME 19, HE HAS SUCCEEDED HIS OLDER BROTHER SUN CE AS THE RULER OF WU STATE.

TAISHI CI:
SUN CE'S TRUSTED GENERAL WHO DEFECTED TO SERVE SUN CE AFTER BEING CAPTURED IN VOLUME 11.

TAO QIAN:
THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY INVOKES CAO CAO'S WRATH WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLS CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG.

THE TEN ATTENDANTS:
A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY SUCCEEDED IN ASSASSINATING GENERAL HE JIN BUT WERE LATER KILLED BY HE JIN'S ARMY LED BY YUAN SHAO.

WANG YUN:
AN OLD MAN WHO HOLDS THE POST OF MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN HAN IMPERIAL COURT. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL USING DIAO CHANG IN VOLUME 8. HOWEVER, HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

WEN CHOU:
HE AND YANG LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 18, HE IS AMBUSHED BY CAO CAO'S ARMY AND KILLED BY GUAN YU.

XIAHOU DUN:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. HE LOST HIS LEFT EYE DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S ARMY IN VOLUME 13.

XU CHU:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HE WAS RECRUITED BY CAO CAO WHO WAS IMPRESSED AFTER SEEING XU CHU'S DUEL WITH DIAN WEI.

SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS
PART 2: OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS

CAO HONG:
GENERAL AND COUSIN TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 6, HE SAVES CAO CAO FROM CERTAIN DEATH.

CAO SONG:
CAO CAO'S FATHER AND A FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED BY TAO QIAN'S ESCORT AND FORMER YELLOW TURBAN, ZHANG KAI.

DING YUAN:
GOVERNOR OF BINGZHOU AND LU BU'S FOSTER-FATHER. HE OBJECTED TO DONG ZHUO'S SCHEME TO PLACE PRINCE CHENLIU AS THE EMPEROR OF HAN, EARNING DONG ZHUO'S WRATH. IN VOLUME 4, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS FOSTER-SON, LU BU, WHO THEN DEFECTS TO SERVE DONG ZHUO.

EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG:
MOTHER TO THE FORMER EMPEROR LING AND GRANDMOTHER TO EMPEROR XIAN. IN VOLUME 3, EMPRESS HE ORDERS FOR HER DEATH TO SECURE HER SON LIU BIAN'S THRONE AS THE NEXT EMPEROR OF HAN.

GAO SHUN:
ONE OF LU BU'S TRUSTED GENERALS. HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH HIS LORD IN VOLUME 14.

GUO SI:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.

HE JIN:
OLDER BROTHER OF EMPRESS HE. ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER BECAME EMPEROR LING'S CONSORT. IN VOLUME 3, HE ATTEMPTS TO ELIMINATE THE TEN ATTENDANTS, ONLY TO BE DISSUADED FROM DOING SO BY HIS YOUNGER SISTER. HE IS LATER KILLED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS.

HOU CHENG:
ONE OF LU BU'S GENERALS. IN VOLUME 14, HE, ALONG WITH GENERALS WEI XU AND SONG XIAN, BETRAYS LU BU AND DEFECTS TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.

HUA XIONG:
FAMED GENERAL SERVING UNDER DONG ZHUO. IN VOLUME 5, HE DEFEATS SUN JIAN'S ARMY BUT IS LATER KILLED BY GUAN YU.

JI PING:
IMPERIAL PHYSICIAN OF HAN WHO, WITH DONG CHENG, PLOTS TO POISON CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 17, CAO CAO DISCOVERS THEIR PLOT AND EXECUTES HIM.

JIANG QIN:
FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI, BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN.

LADY FUYOU:
FICTIONAL CHARACTER CREATED BY MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA AND LIU BEI'S FIRST LOVE. ZHANG FEI FORMERLY SERVED HER FAMILY, WHO WERE MASSCRED BY THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELS.

LADY MI:
LIU BEI'S FIRST WIFE.

LI JUE:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND GUO SI TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.

LIU BIAN:
THE SON OF EMPRESS HE AND BRIEFLY THE EMPEROR OF HAN AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, EMPEROR LING. IN VOLUME 4, HE WAS DEPOSED BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED ALONG WITH HIS MOTHER BY LI RU.

LU ZHI:
LIU BEI'S FORMER TEACHER AND THE PALACE COMMANDER WHO WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF LEADING THE HAN ARMY AGAINST THE YELLOW TURBANS. HE WAS LATER DEMOTED FOR FAILING TO BRIBE ONE OF THE IMPERIAL MESSENGERS.

ZHANG BAO:
ZHANG JIAO'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE YELLOW TURBAN'S GENERAL OF THE LAND. HE WAS KILLED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 2.

ZHANG JIAO:
LEADER OF THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION.
HE PASSED AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 3.

ZHANG ZHAO/ZHANG HONG:
THE TWO GENIUSES OF JIANGDONG, ALSO KNOWN AS THE "TWO ZHANGS." AFTER SUN CE'S ADMANT INSISTENCE, THEY DECIDE TO SERVE HIM AND HELP HIS CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER JIANGNAN AND JIANGDONG.

ZHOU TAI:
FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志

VOLUME 20
LIU BEI AND THE HEX MARKED HORSE

SHUI JING 133

THE WANDERER SHAN FU 107

CROSSING THE TAN TORRENT 84

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THE REVOLT AT JIANGXIA 13

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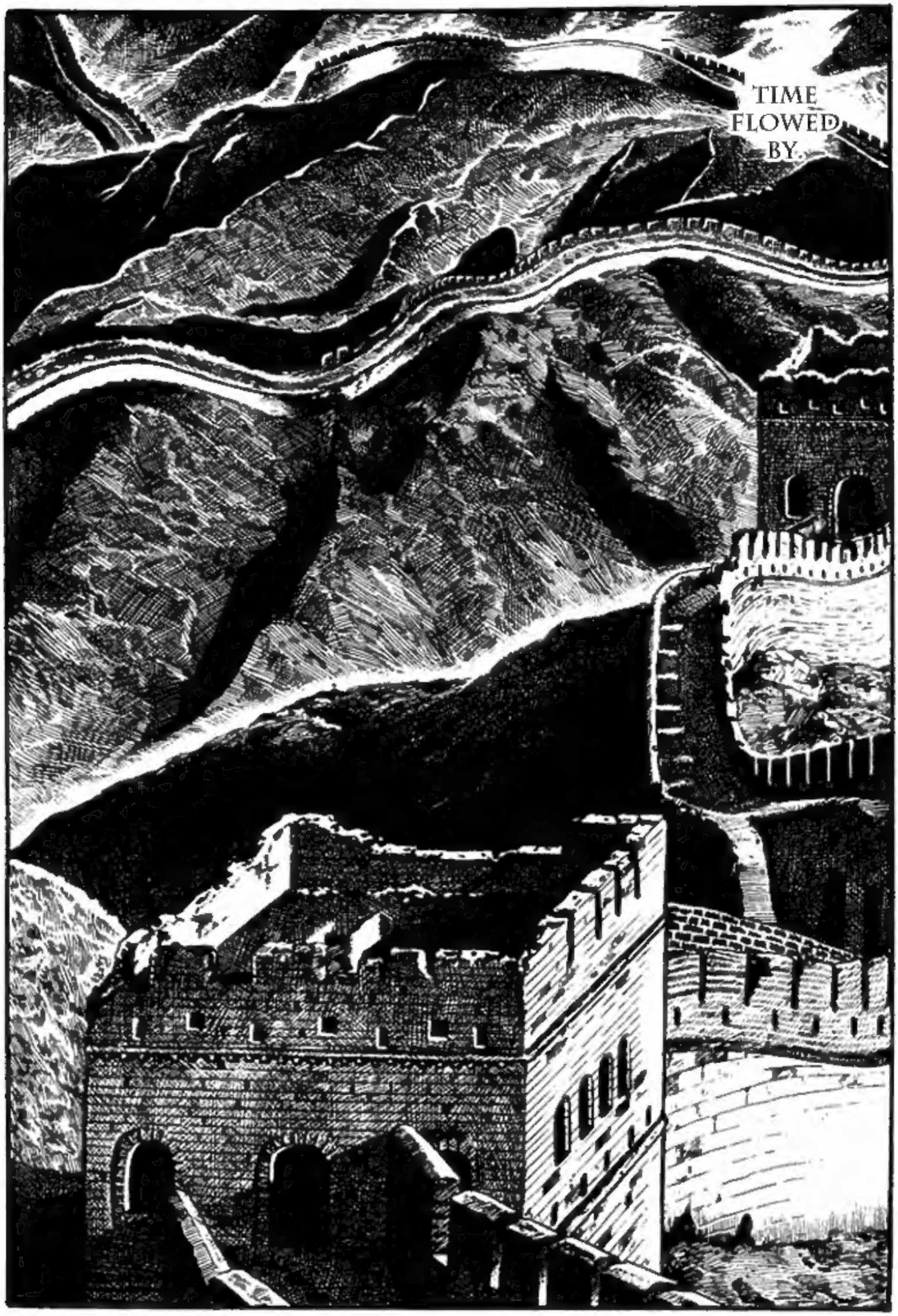
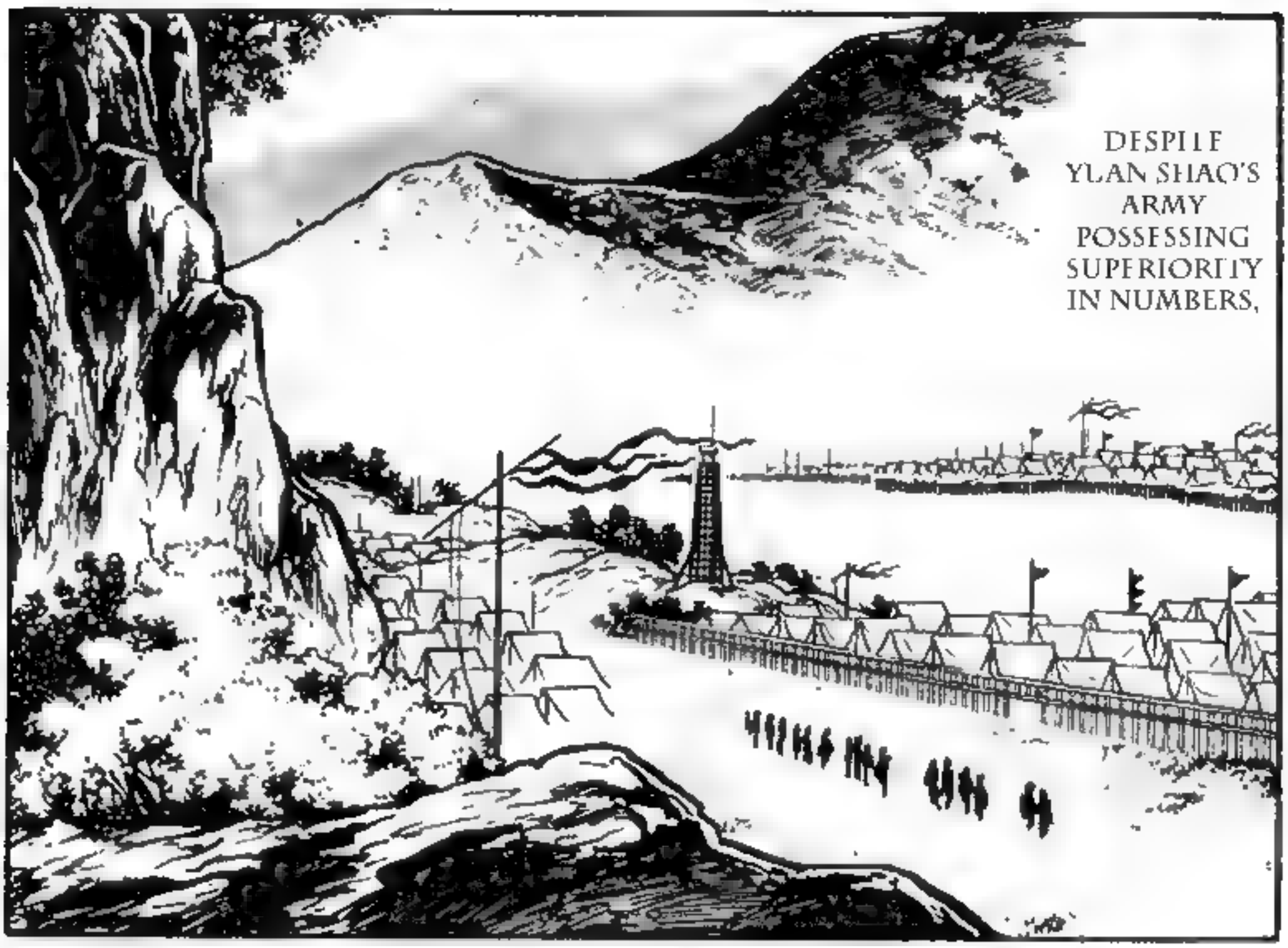

TIME
FLOWED
BY.

SINCE LAST TIME, THE POLITICAL CLIMATE OF CHINA HAD CHANGED DRAMATICALLY.

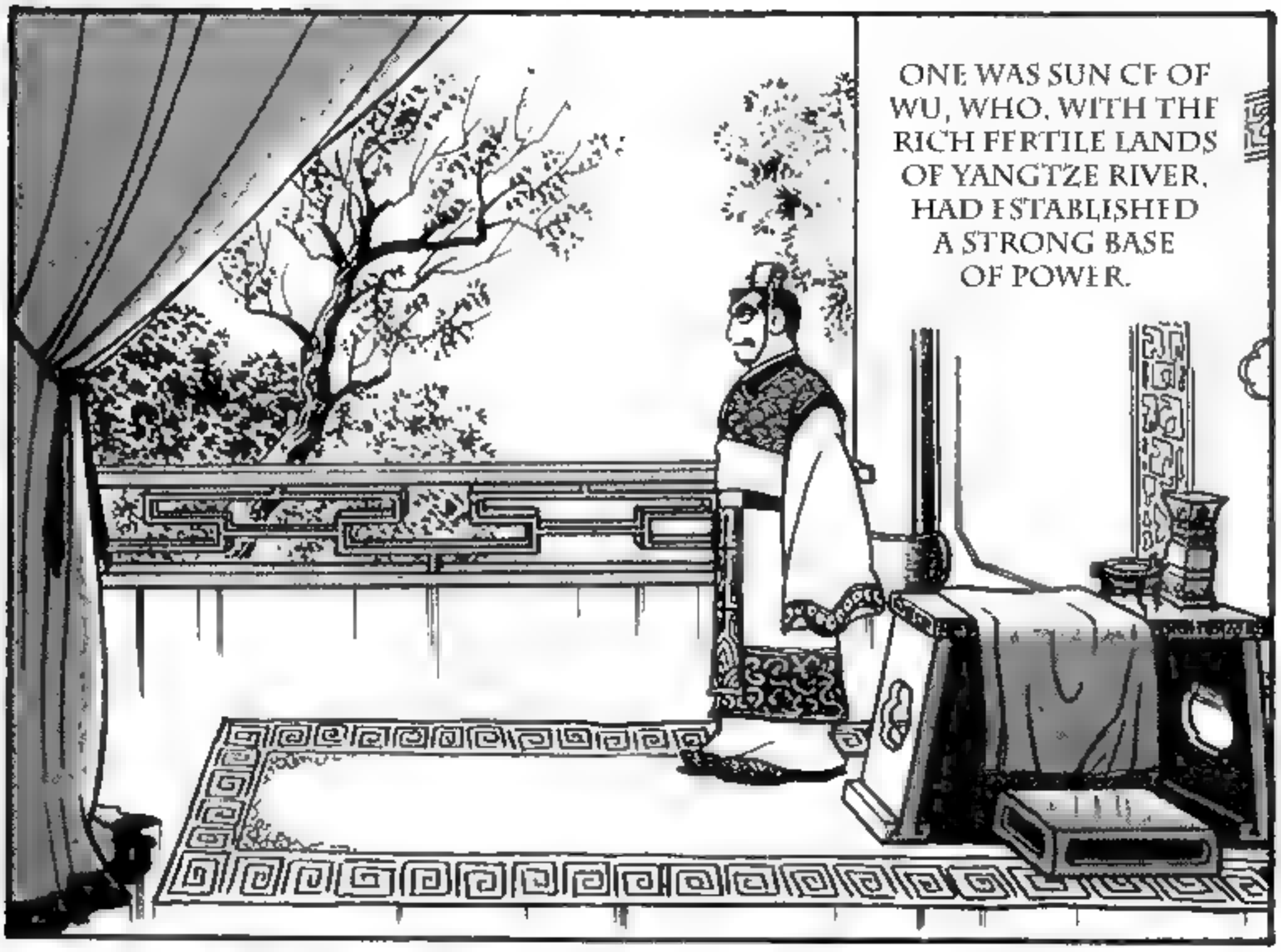
CAO CAO HAD ONCE AGAIN FURTHER INCREASED AND SOLIDIFIED HIS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE BY LABELLING ANY WHO OPPOSED HIM AS REBELS OF HAN.

THIS WAS ONLY MADE POSSIBLE AFTER CAO CAO'S TRIUMPHANT VICTORY OVER YUAN SHAO IN NORTHERN CHINA


DESPITE YUAN SHAO'S ARMY POSSESSING SUPERIORITY IN NUMBERS,

CAO CAO'S SUPERIOR STRATEGY HAD ENABLED HIS FORCES TO ACHIEVE A DECISIVE VICTORY AT GUANDU. RIDING ON THIS MOMENTUM, CAO CAO SUCCEEDED IN CRUSHING THE LAST OF THE YUAN FAMILY'S BASE OF POWER WITHIN A FEW YEARS AFTER THE BATTLE OF GUANDU.

HAVING FINALLY UNIFIED THE NORTH, CAO CAO THEN TURNED HIS ATTENTION SOUTHWARD. HOWEVER, IN THE SOUTH WERE TWO INDIVIDUALS IMPEDING CAO CAO'S AMBITIONS


ONE WAS SUN CE OF WU, WHO, WITH THE RICH FERTILE LANDS OF YANGTZE RIVER, HAD ESTABLISHED A STRONG BASE OF POWER.

THE SECOND WAS A MAN CONTINUALLY PURSUED BY CAO CAO AND THUS NEEDED THE CARE OF JINGZHOU'S GOVERNOR LIU BIAO JUST TO SURVIVE

HIS NAME WAS LIU BEI.
DESPITE NOT HAVING ANY
LANDS OF HIS OWN, HE WAS
LIKED AND RESPECTED BY
MANY MEN. THAT INFLUENCE
AND POTENTIAL WAS SOME
THING CAO CAO COULD NOT
IGNORE. MOREOVER, LIU BEI
WAS A MAN WHO ASPIRED TO
CRUSH CAO CAO'S AMBITION
NO MATTER WHAT SOMEDAY

THE REVOLT AT JIANGXIA

MNN... IT CERTAINLY WAS AN UNEXPECTED RESULT.

XUANDE, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF YUAN SHAO'S ANNHILATION AT CAO CAO'S HANDS?

TO THINK THAT HE WOULD BE SO THOROUGHLY DEFEATED BY CAO CAO...

YUAN SHAO'S ARMY HAD THE CLEAR EDGE IN TERMS OF NUMBERS AND EQUIPMENT BUT...

MY LORD!

I'M AFRAID THAT THERE'S NO ONE ELSE LEFT ANYMORE IN THESE LANDS WHO CAN MATCH CAO CAO.

THERE'S BEEN A REVOLT AT JIANGXIA!

WHAT IS IT?

I'M AFRAID IT WILL SPREAD QUICKLY IF NOTHING IS DONE SOON, MY LORD.
WHAT!?
YES, MY LORD.
DISPATCH MY ARMY TO DEAL WITH THE REBELS IMMEDIATELY!
CONSIDERING HOW MY 3000 SOLDIERS AND I ARE SIMPLY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GENEROSITY, WE WISH TO BE OF SERVICE IN ANY WAY.
SIR, WOULD YOU MIND BESTOWING THE TASK OF QUELLING THE REVOLT TO ME?

THANK YOU, SIR.

WHY OF COURSE, XUANDE. I SHALL GLADLY LEAVE IT TO YOU THEN.

GUAN YU! ZHANG FEI! ZHAO YUN! IT'S TIME TO DEPART!

THERE'S BEEN A REVOLT AT JIANGXIA.

DEPART? WHERE TO?

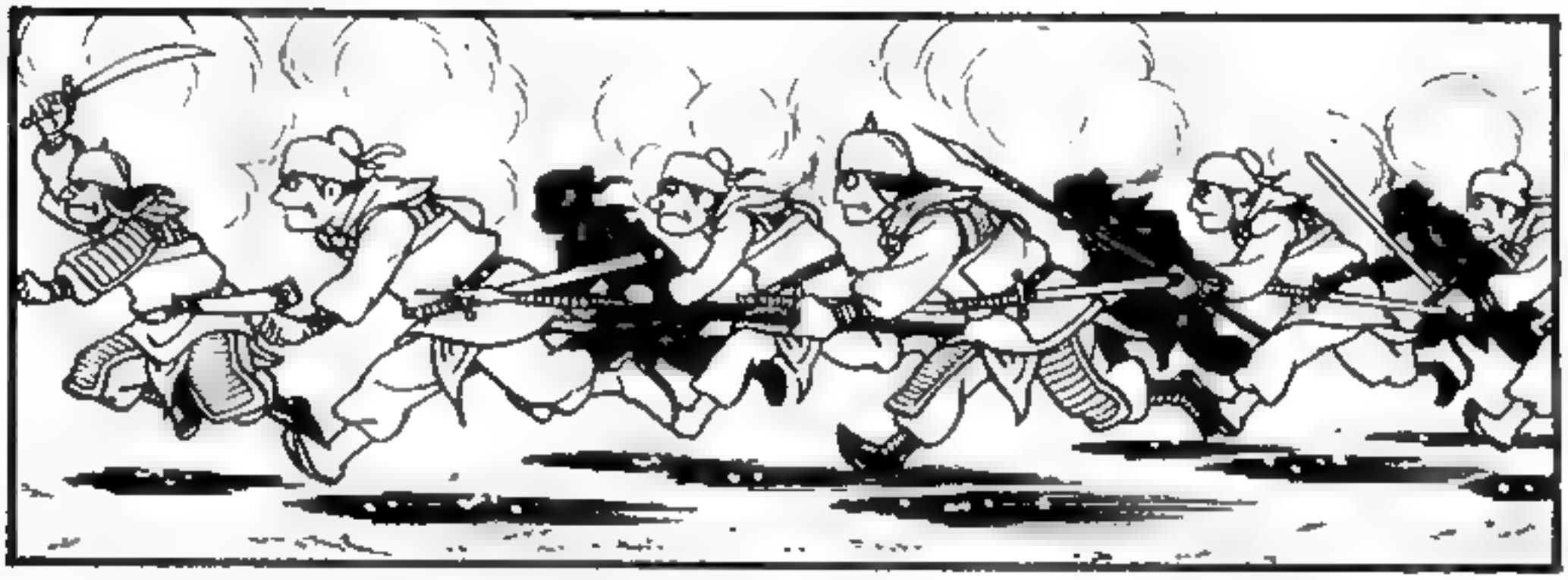
AM I RIGHT?

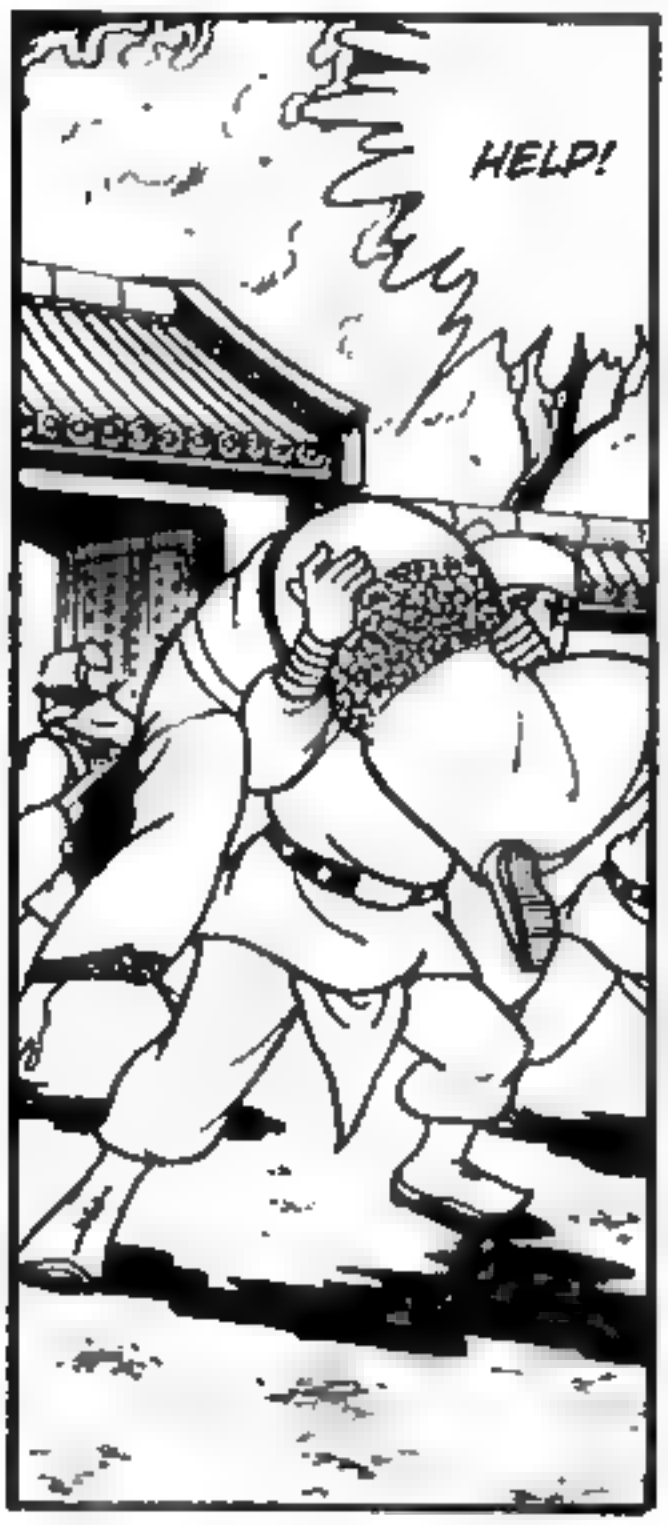
HAHA, THAT'S GREAT! MY BODY'S BEEN ITCHING FOR SOME ACTION AFTER MONTHS OF INACTIVITY.

YOU NEVER CHANGE, DO YOU?

COME ON, DON'T JUST STAND THERE. LET'S HURRY UP AND GET GOING.

FEEL FREE TO TAKE AS MUCH AS YOU WANT, BOYS!




HELP!

QUITE RIGHT, GENERAL. THESE REBELS ARE LED BY GENERALS ZHANG WU AND CHEN SUN, KNOWN FOR THEIR WILDNESS.

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT QUITE A VIOLENT BUNCH.

YES.

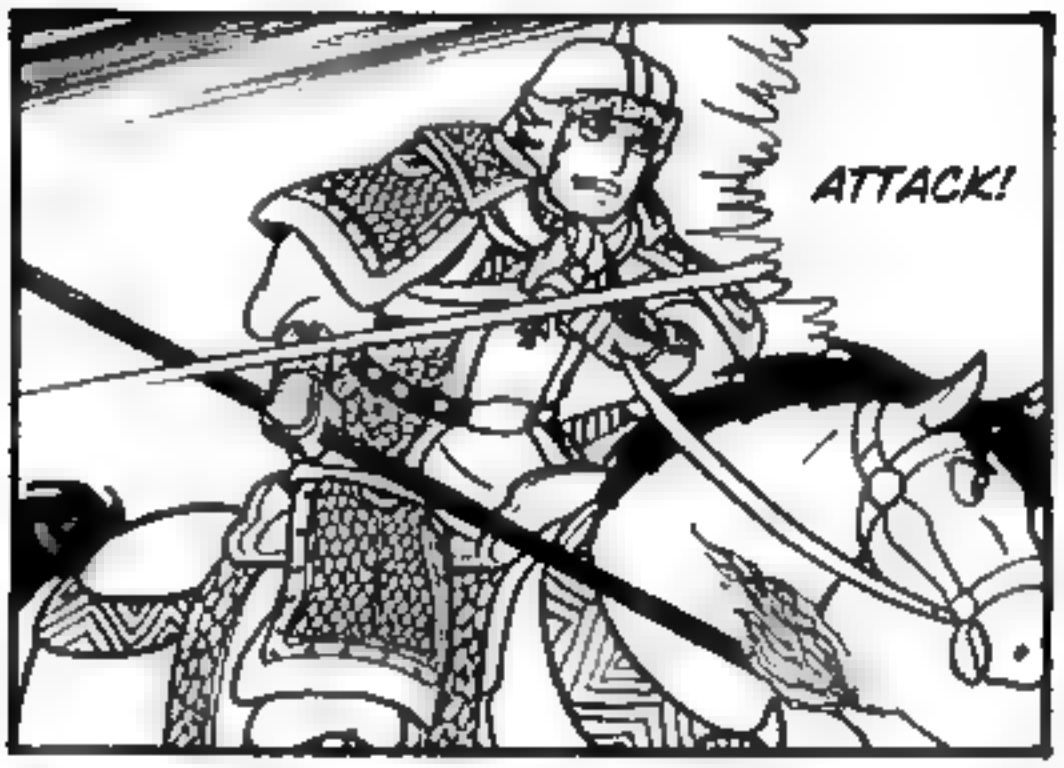
ALRIGHT THEN. WE SHALL ATTACK WITH A STANDARD THREE-PRONGED ATTACK WITH GUAN YU, ZHANG FEI, AND ZHAO YUN LEADING EACH HEAD.

NOW THEN...

HEH HEH HEH

CHARGE!

ALRIGHT MEN, READY FOR SOME ACTION? THEN FOLLOW AFTER ME.


ATTACK!

NOW!

HMM?

AHH!

GENERAL, OVER THERE!

THERE'RE ENEMIES OVER THERE TOO!

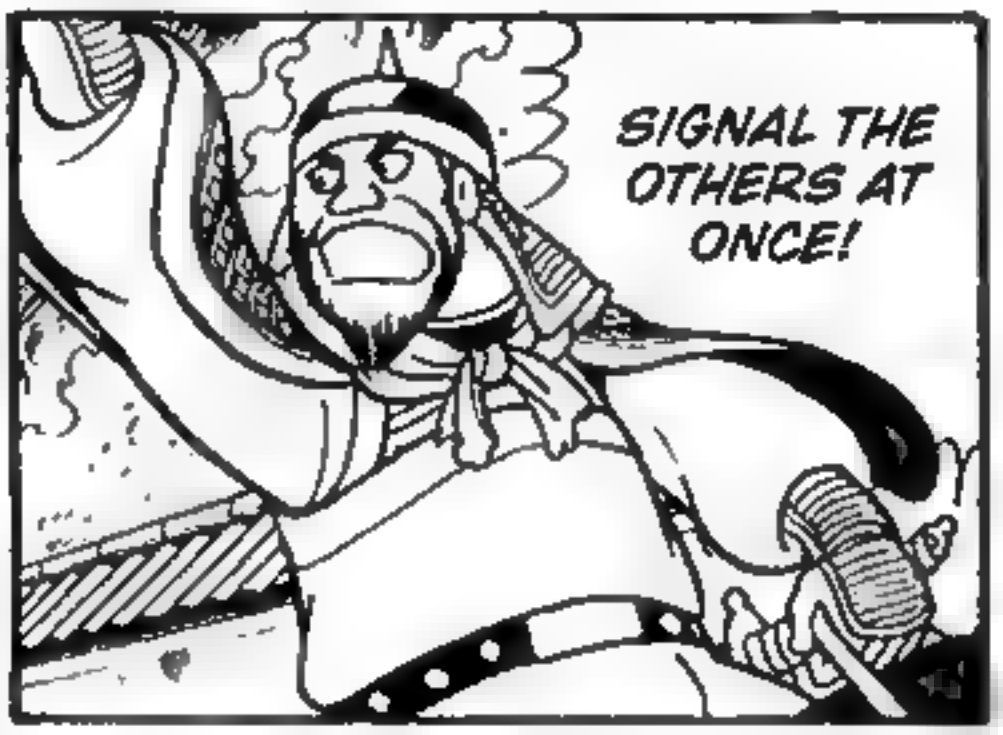
MUST BE JINGZHOU'S FORCES. IF THEY WANT A FIGHT, SO BE IT!

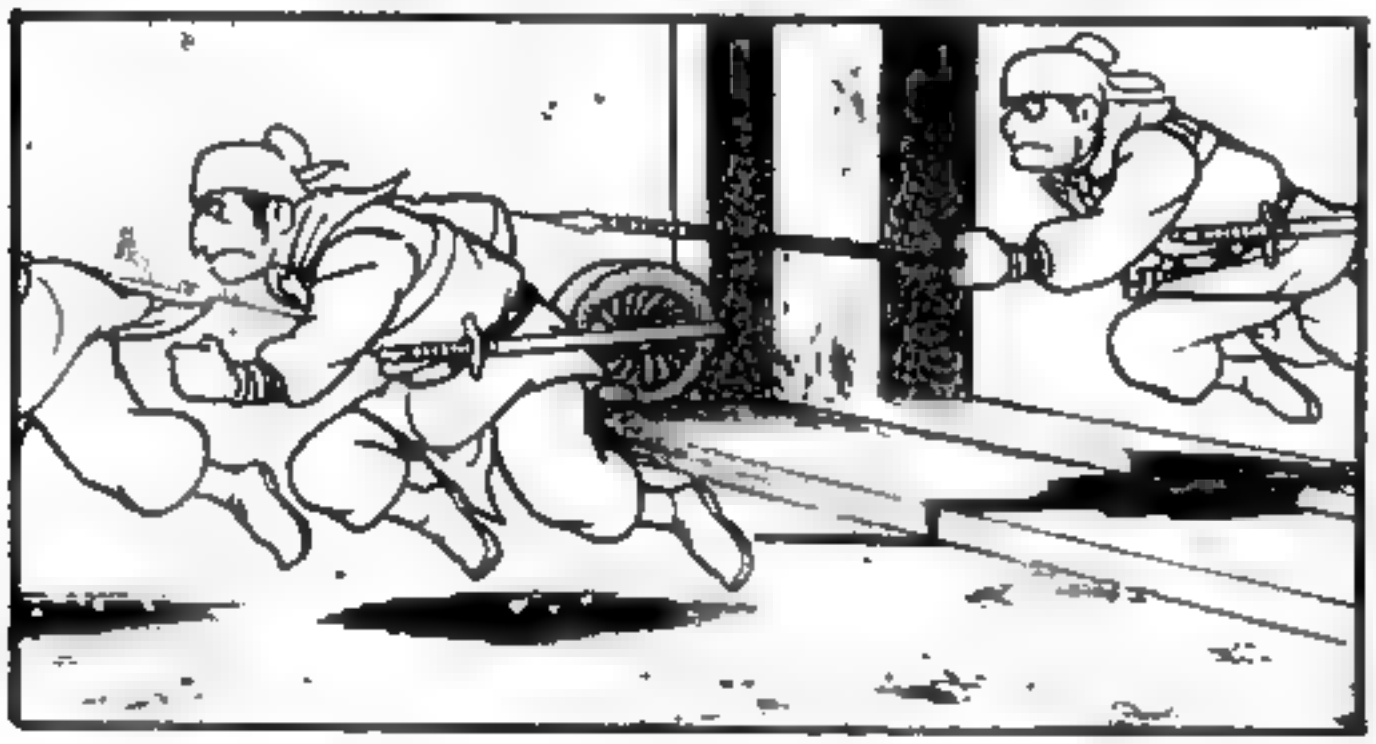
HM!?

THERE ARE ENEMIES COMING FROM 3 DIRECT-IONS!

AH!

GONG!
GONG!


SIGNAL THE OTHERS AT ONCE!



DON'T PANIC, MEN! THIS MUCH OF AN ARMY IS NOTHING!

DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!

YOU SMALL-TIMERS THINK YOU CAN TAKE OVER THIS ENTIRE STATE?

ENOUGH WITH THE SMALL FRIES! WHERE'S YOUR LEADER!?

ZHANG WU!

CHEN SUN, SHOW YOURSELF!

SO YOU'VE FINALLY SHOWN.

YOU WANTED ZHANG WU? WELL HERE I AM!

HERE TO TAKE YOUR HEAD.

I AM ZHAO YUN ZILONG,

IF ONLY ZHANG WU HAD KNOWN OF ZHAO YUN'S PROWESS.

HA, I SHOULD SAY THAT TO *YOU!*

HE WOULD'VE THROWN AWAY HIS EGO AND RAN AWAY WITHOUT THINKING...

ZHANG WU'S HEART WAS PIERCED BY ZHAO YUN'S SPEAR IN AN INSTANT

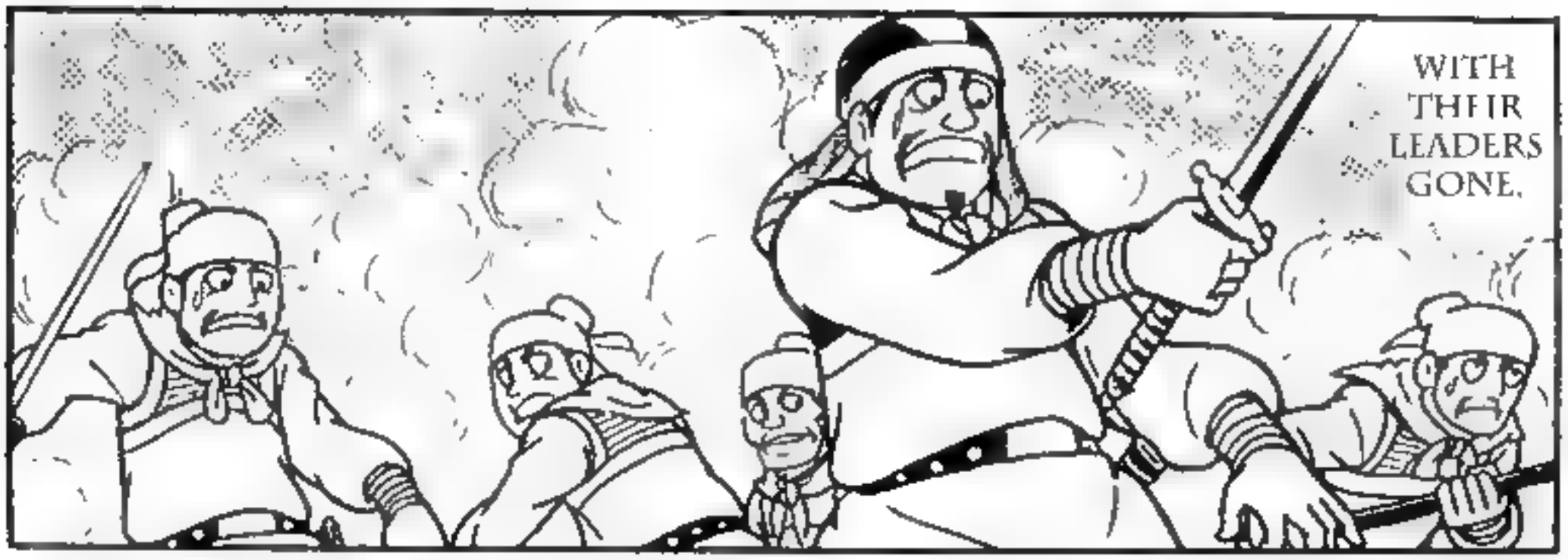
IT WAS MOST UNFORTUNATE THAT HE WAS IGNORANT OF ZHANG FEI S FAME AND THUS ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE SUCH AN ACT WAS THE SAME AS WILLINGLY LEAPING INTO HIS OWN GRAVE...

THE SAME WENT FOR THE OTHER REBEL LEADER CHEN SUN.

AGH!

ACK!

NOT EVEN GIVEN A CHANCE TO SWING HIS BLADE, CHEN SUN WAS CUT DOWN IN TWO.


WITH THEIR LEADERS GONE.

THE REBELS STOOD NO CHANCE AGAINST LIU BEI'S BATTLE HARDENED ARMY

WITHIN AN INSTANT, THE REBELS WERE ANNHILATED AND THE FEW SURVIVORS FLED FOR THEIR LIVES.

YES, THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK.
THE REBELS HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH, MY LORD.

HM? AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?

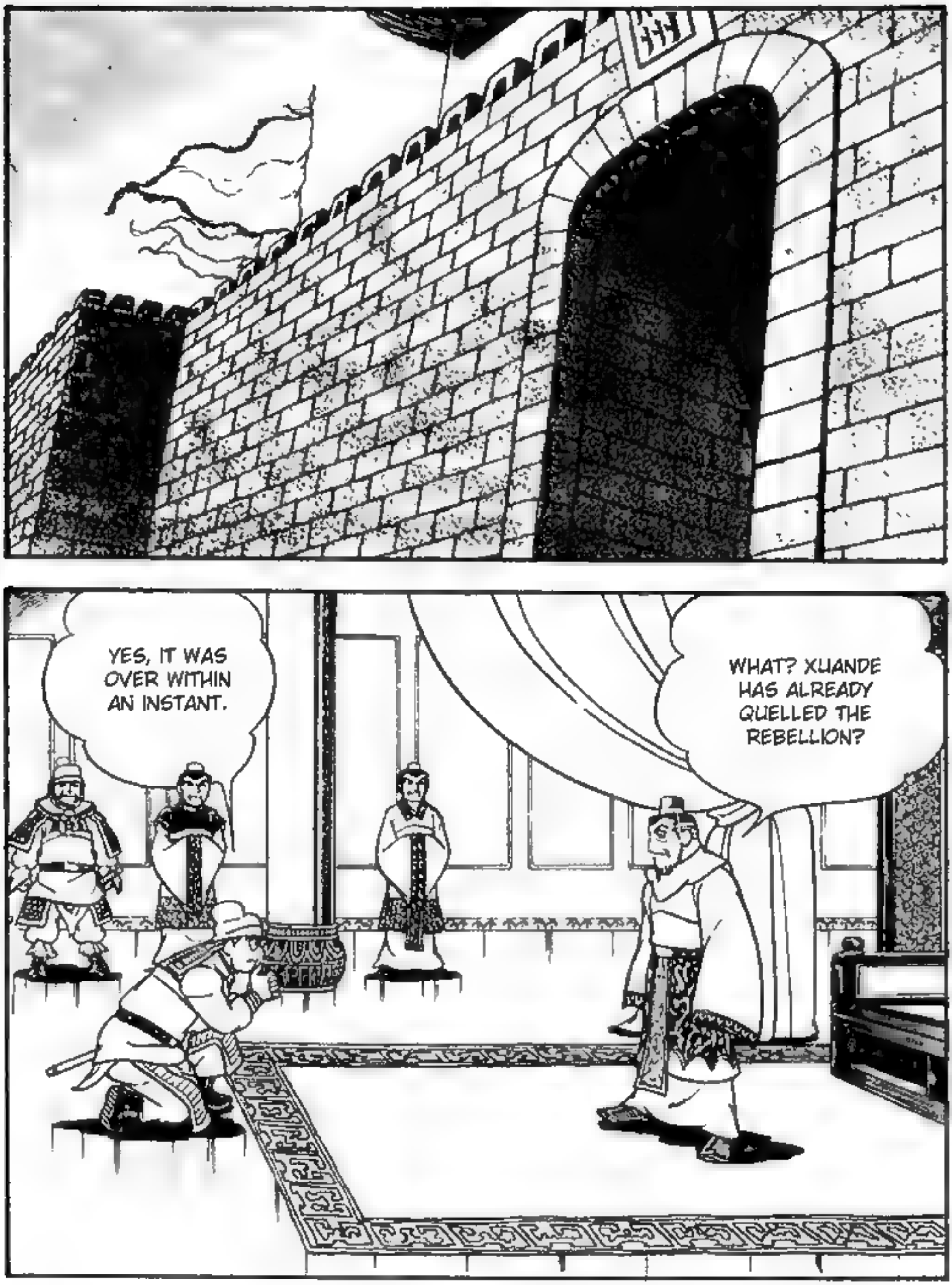
I HAVE A VICTORY GIFT TO PRESENT TO MY LORD.

OVER HERE!

AH, WHAT A FINE HORSE IT IS.
IT IS THIS STEED, MY LORD.

I THANK YOU KINDLY, ZHAO YUN.
IT WAS THE REBEL LEADER WANG ZHU'S HORSE AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A WASTE TO GO UNCLAIMED.
GOOD, NOW LET US RIDE BACK TO JINGZHOU!

HEX MARKED HORSE



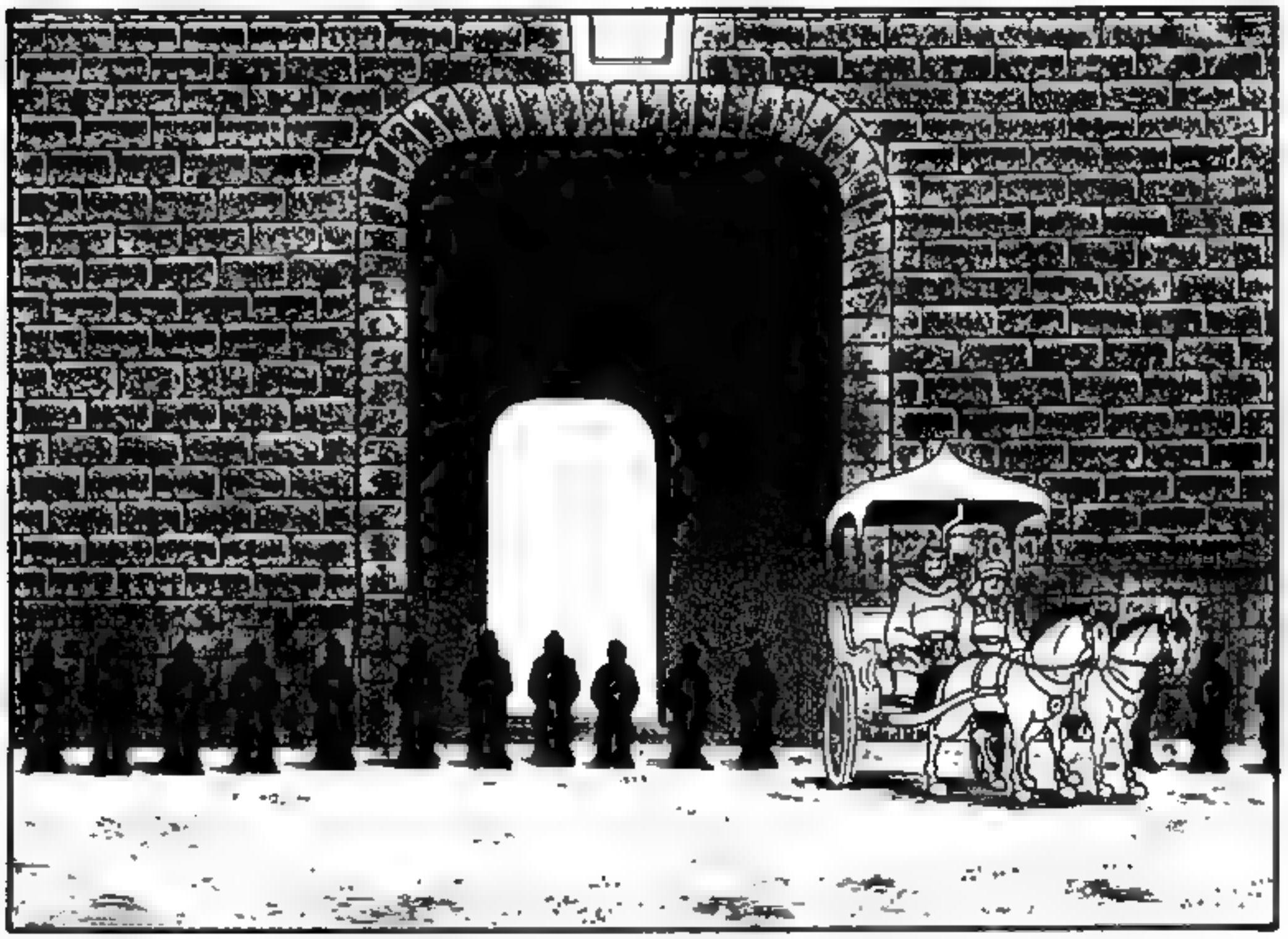
RIGHT, OF COURSE. GUAN YU ALONE IS A MAN WHO PASSED UNSCATHED THROUGH CAO CAO'S 5 PASSES.

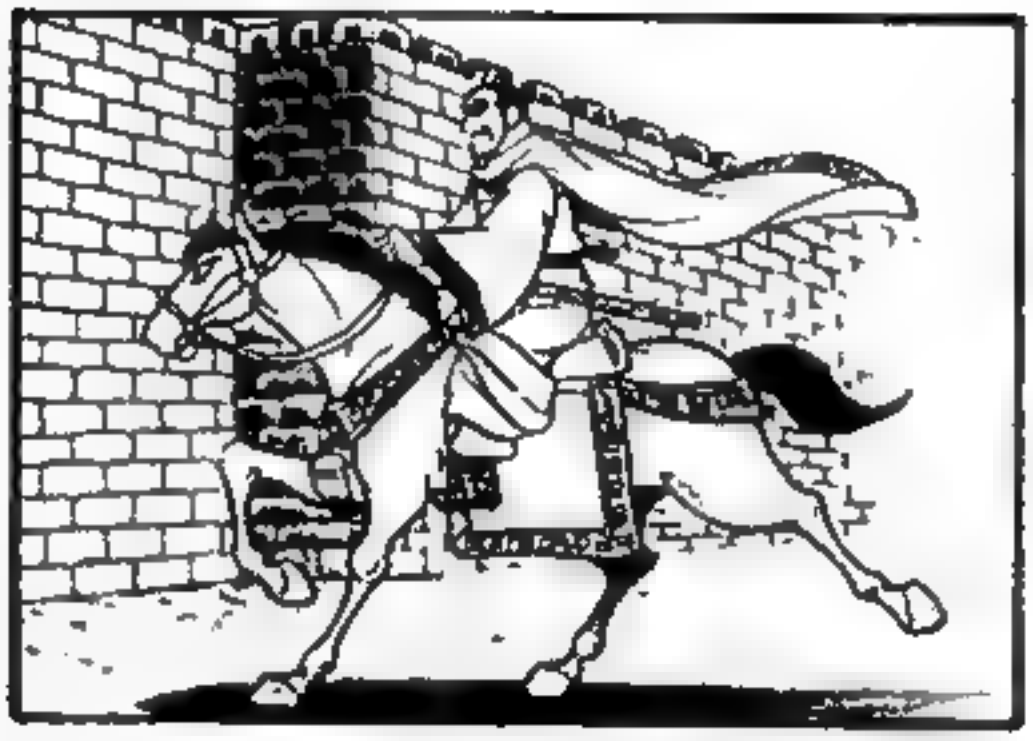
NONE OF THE REBELS COULD STAND UP TO THE LIKES OF GUAN YU, ZHANG FEI, OR ZHAO YUN. THEY ALL FLED ONCE THEIR LEADERS FELL.

AND ON TOP OF THAT, THERE'S ZHANG FEI AND ZHAO YUN, WHO ARE SAID TO BE AS STRONG AS GUAN YU. I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT'D BE LIKE TO FACE THOSE 3 AT ONCE.

GENTLEMEN! LET US ALL GO OUTSIDE THE CASTLE GATES TO WELCOME IMPERIAL UNCLE LIU'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN.

IT'S NO WONDER CAO CAO FEARS LIU BEI DESPITE NOT HAVING ANY TERRITORY OF HIS OWN.





NOT AT ALL, MY FRIEND. I SHOULD BE THE ONE THANKING YOU SINCE YOU GOT RID OF THOSE REBELS FOR ME.

TO THINK THAT SIR WOULD COME OUTSIDE THE CASTLE GATES TO GREET THE LIKES OF ME! I COULD NOT BE MORE HONOURED.

HANZHONG'S ZHANG LU AND WU'S SUN QUAN BOTH AIM TO TAKE MY LANDS. BECAUSE OF THAT, JINGZHOU'S BORDERS ARE UNDER CONSTANT THREAT OF ATTACK.

WELL, THERE ARE ALWAYS BOUND TO BE PROBLEMS IN PLACES WHERE HUMANS LIVE.

MIGHT YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE A GOOD SOLUTION FOR THIS PROBLEM, XUANDE?

OH?

BUT I THINK I CAN ALLEVIATE YOUR WORRIES BY HAVING MY MEN HELP OUT WITH THE BORDER DEFENSE.

AS FOR ZHAO YUN, GIVE HIM SOME SHIPS WITH WHICH TO PROTECT THE THREE GORGES FROM SUN QUAN TO THE EAST. I ASSURE YOU MY MEN SHALL NOT FAIL IN THEIR TASK.

SEND ZHANG FEI TO NANYUE AND GUAN YU TO GUZI CASTLE TO DEFEND AGAINST ZHANG LU TO THE WEST.

OF COURSE! THOSE THREE ARE CERTAINLY MORE THAN DEPENDABLE.

THANK YOU AGAIN. I SHALL MAKE PLANS TO CARRY OUT YOUR SUGGESTION RIGHT AWAY.

I FEEL RATHER GUILTY JUST SITTING HERE AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR KINDNESS SO IF THERE'S ANYTHING MORE I CAN DO, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO ASK.

THERE'S SOMETHING THAT I NEEDED TO URGENTLY DISCUSS WITH YOU.

BROTHER? WHAT IS IT AT THIS LATE IN THE NIGHT?

OUR LORD IS THINKING OF ENTRUSTING BORDER GUARD DUTIES TO LIU BEI.

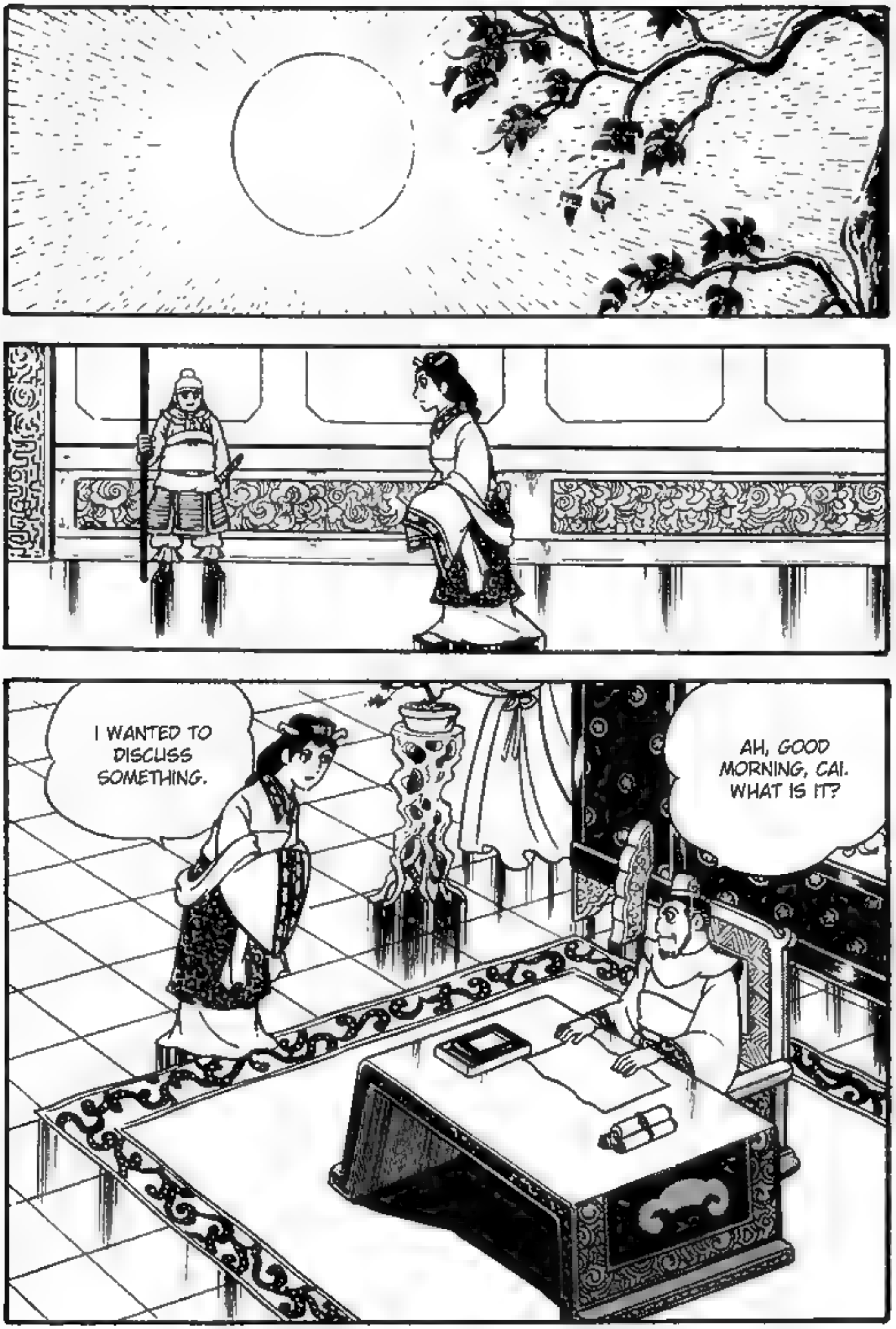
HAVE YOU SAID THAT TO OUR LORD?

ISN'T LIU BEI *THE* MAN THAT EVEN CAO CAO IS CAUTIOUS OF? ENTRUST A MAN LIKE HIM WITH POWER AND IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE HE'LL TRY TO CONQUER ALL OF JINGZHOU.

WELL, THAT'S ...

YES, BROTHER. I'LL MENTION IT FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING.

I'M AFRAID MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD WILL SOUR IF I BRING IT UP MYSELF. IT'D BE BEST FOR YOU TO BRING IT UP, CONSIDERING YOU'RE HIS WIFE.


I WANTED TO DISCUSS SOMETHING.
AH, GOOD MORNING, CAI. WHAT IS IT?

YES, AND?

I HEARD THAT YOU WERE PLANNING ON ENTRUSTING OUR BORDERS TO LIU BEI.

TO BE FRANK, THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THAT MAN THAT MAKES ME UNEASY. I MEAN, ISN'T IT TRUE THAT HE USED TO BE A MERE STRAW-MAT PEDDLER?

I BEG YOU TO RECONSIDER, DEAR. CAN ANOTHER MAN BE SO EASILY TRUSTED?

THEN WHAT ABOUT HIS RETAINERS? I HEARD THAT ZHANG FEI HAD PREVIOUSLY RULED OVER GUCHENG CASTLE WITH A BANDIT HORDE.

YES, BUT THAT WAS ONLY TO HIDE HIS TRUE ANCESTRY. IT'S UNDOUBTABLE THAT HE IS OF ROYAL LINEAGE.

NO, I SHAN'T BELIEVE SUCH EXCUSES.

THAT WAS ONLY TO REBUILD THEIR BASE OF POWER AFTER HAVING LOST XUZHOU TO THAT WICKED CAO CAO.

THAT'S ENOUGH!

IF YOU GIVE THE MOST IMPORTANT DUTIES AND POSTS TO LIU BEI AND HIS MEN, I FEAR THAT OUR STATE WILL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM US RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES.

I'M ONLY SAYING THIS AS A LOVING WIFE CONCERNED ABOUT HER HUSBAND'S WELL BEING.

WOMEN SHOULD NOT INVOLVE THEMSELVES WITH THE MATTERS OF A STATE.

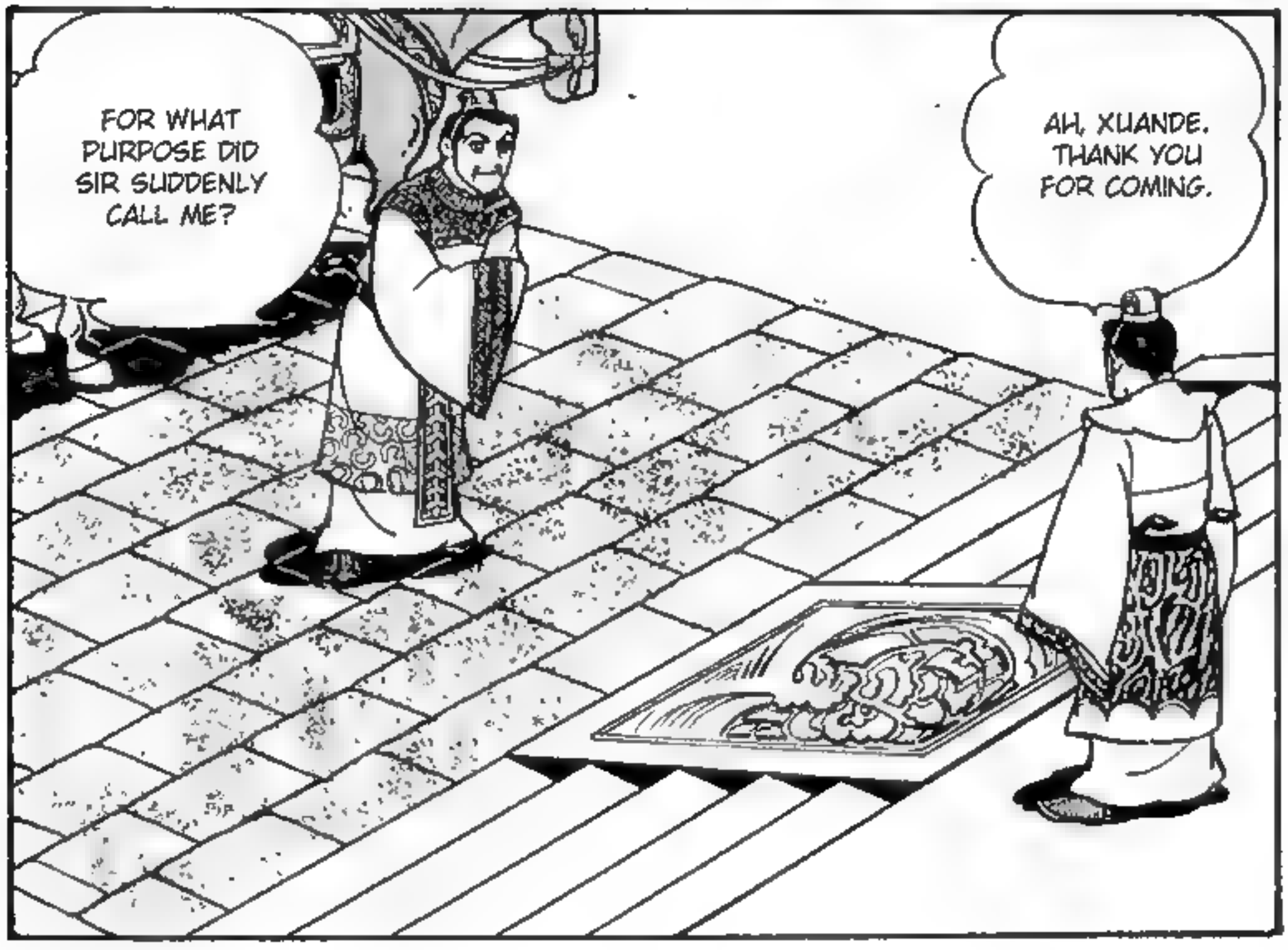
PLEASE THINK IT OVER.

JUST WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO OUR SON IF JINGZHOU WERE TO BE LOST!?

.....

NO MATTER HOW TALENTED LIU BEI AND HIS MEN MAY BE, ENTRUSTING THE MATTERS OF A STATE TO TOO MANY OUTSIDERS CAN ONLY SPELL TROUBLE...

HMM... SHE DOES HAVE A POINT.


FOR WHAT PURPOSE DID SIR SUDDENLY CALL ME?
AH, XUANDE. THANK YOU FOR COMING.

I FEEL LIKE I OVERREACTED A LITTLE IN LIGHT OF THE SUDDEN REVOLT.

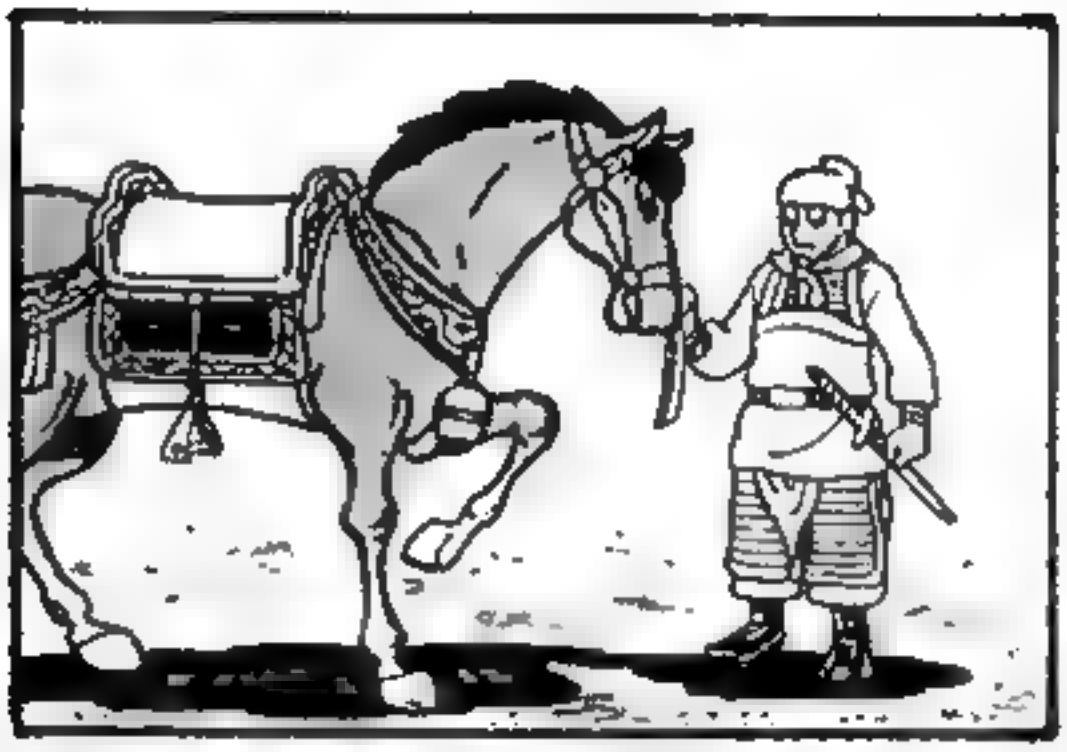
IT'S ABOUT WHAT WE DISCUSSED EARLIER.

OH, IS THAT SO? WELL, I DO NOT MIND EITHER WAY.

BUT NOW THAT I HAD SOME TIME TO THINK IT OVER, I DO NOT THINK I NEED TO TIGHTEN MY BORDER DEFENSES ANY FURTHER THAN I ALREADY HAVE.

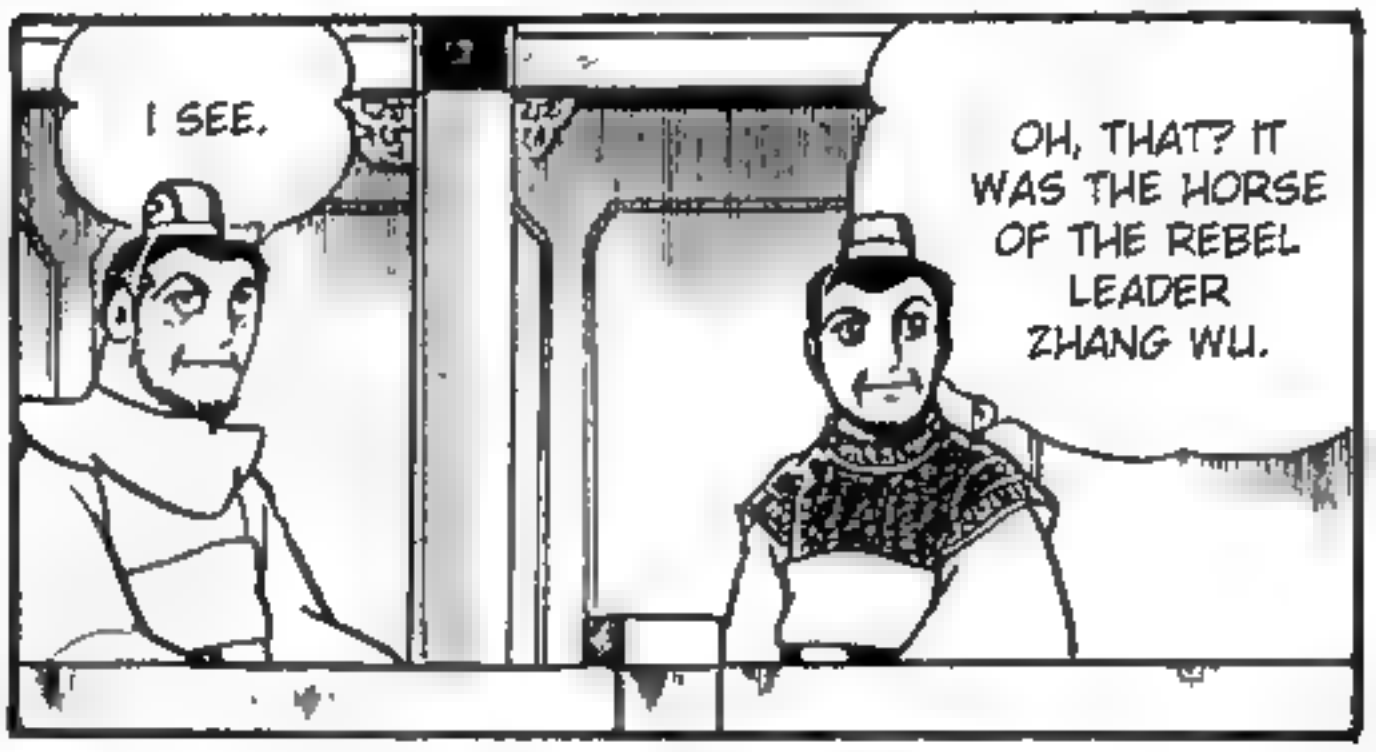
AS YOU WISH, SIR.

THANK YOU. I'LL ASK FOR YOUR HELP WHEN THE TIME COMES.



BY THE WAY, IS THAT A NEW HORSE YOU HAVE...?

WELL, IT CERTAINLY IS A SPLENDID HORSE.


I SEE.
OH, THAT? IT WAS THE HORSE OF THE REBEL LEADER ZHANG WU.

YES, OF COURSE. IT'S NOTHING AFTER ALL SIR HAS DONE FOR ME.
REALLY?

IF IT'S TO SIR'S LIKING, I WOULD GLADLY GIVE IT TO YOU.

THANK YOU AGAIN.

YES.

THEN I SHALL SEE YOU TOMORROW AT THE BANQUET.

IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME THEN...

AN EXCELLENT STALLION, INDEED. TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT, SIR.

WHY, IT'S MORE MAGNIFICENT THE MORE I LOOK AT IT!

WHAT IS MY LORD PLANNING TO DO WITH THAT HORSE...?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS HORSE? MARVELLOUS, ISN'T IT? IT BELONGED TO THAT REBEL LEADER ZHANG WU AND XUANDE HAS GIVEN IT TO ME JUST NOW.

AH, IF IT ISN'T KUAI YUE.

MY BROTHER IS A JUDGE OF HORSES AND SO I KNOW A THING OR TWO MYSELF.

WHAT!?

I'M AFRAID IT WOULD BE BETTER TO RETURN THIS HORSE BACK TO LIU BEI.

THIS IS A HEXED HORSE KNOWN AS A DILU HORSE.

YES, A HORSE SAID TO BRING BAD LUCK TO ITS RIDER.

HEXED!?

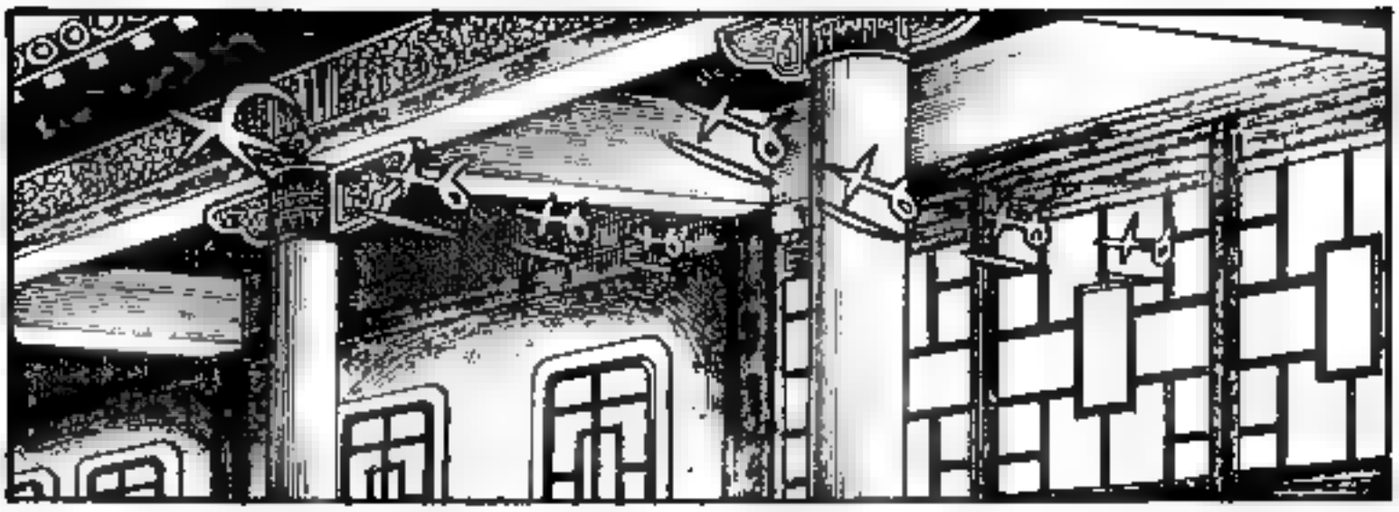
THERE'S ALSO THIS WHITE MARK ON ITS HEAD, WHICH IS KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MOST OMINOUS HEX MARKS.

SEE THESE FOUR LEGS THAT ARE WHITE AT THE BOTTOM? THIS IS A CLASSIC SIGN OF A HEXED HORSE.

ZHANG WU MUST HAVE ALSO BEEN UNAWARE OF THE HORSE'S TRUE NATURE AND CONSEQUENTLY LOST HIS LIFE.

MNN...

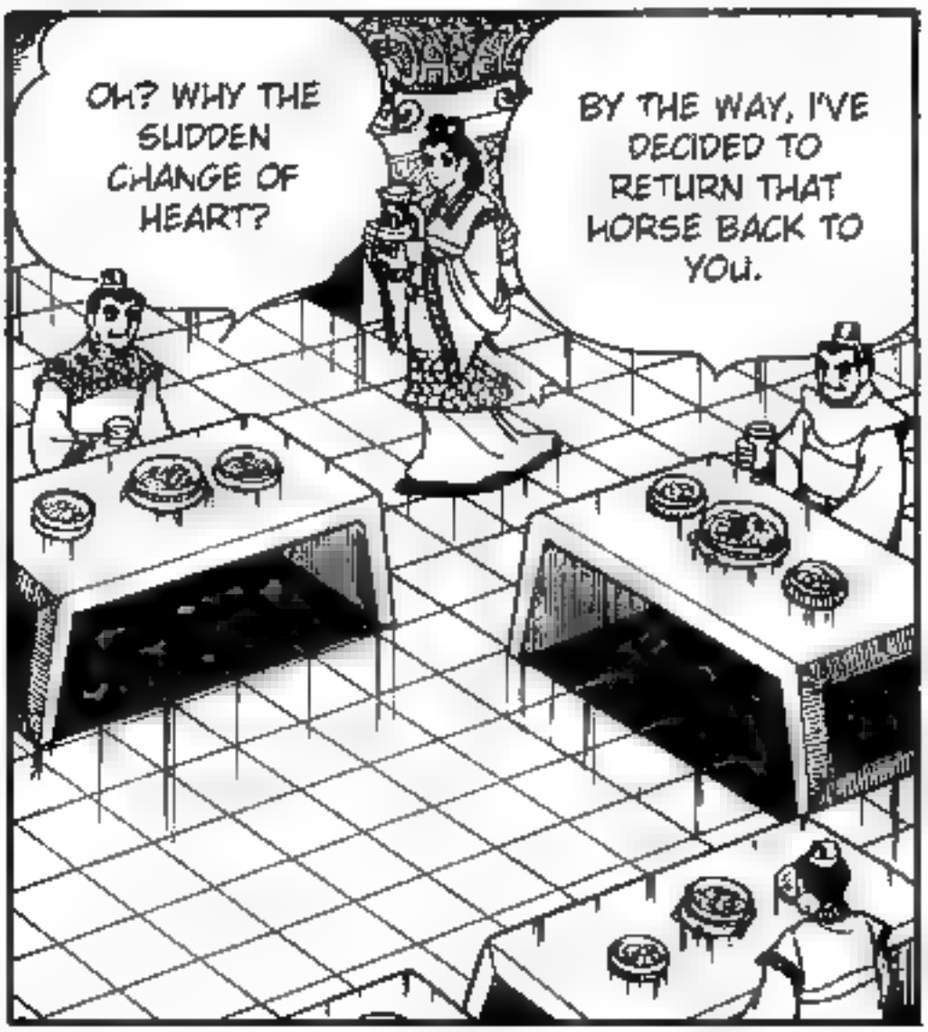
I URGE MY LORD TO SEND THIS HORSE BACK.



YES, THANK YOU FOR THIS MEAL.

COME THEN, DRINK!

OH, IT'S NOTHING. I'M AFRAID ALL I WOULD DO WITH A FINE HORSE LIKE THAT IS LOCK IT UP IN MY STABLE. IT'S BETTER OFF WITH A MAN LIKE YOU WHO'LL REALLY RIDE IT.


OH? WHY THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF HEART?
BY THE WAY, I'VE DECIDED TO RETURN THAT HORSE BACK TO YOU.

?

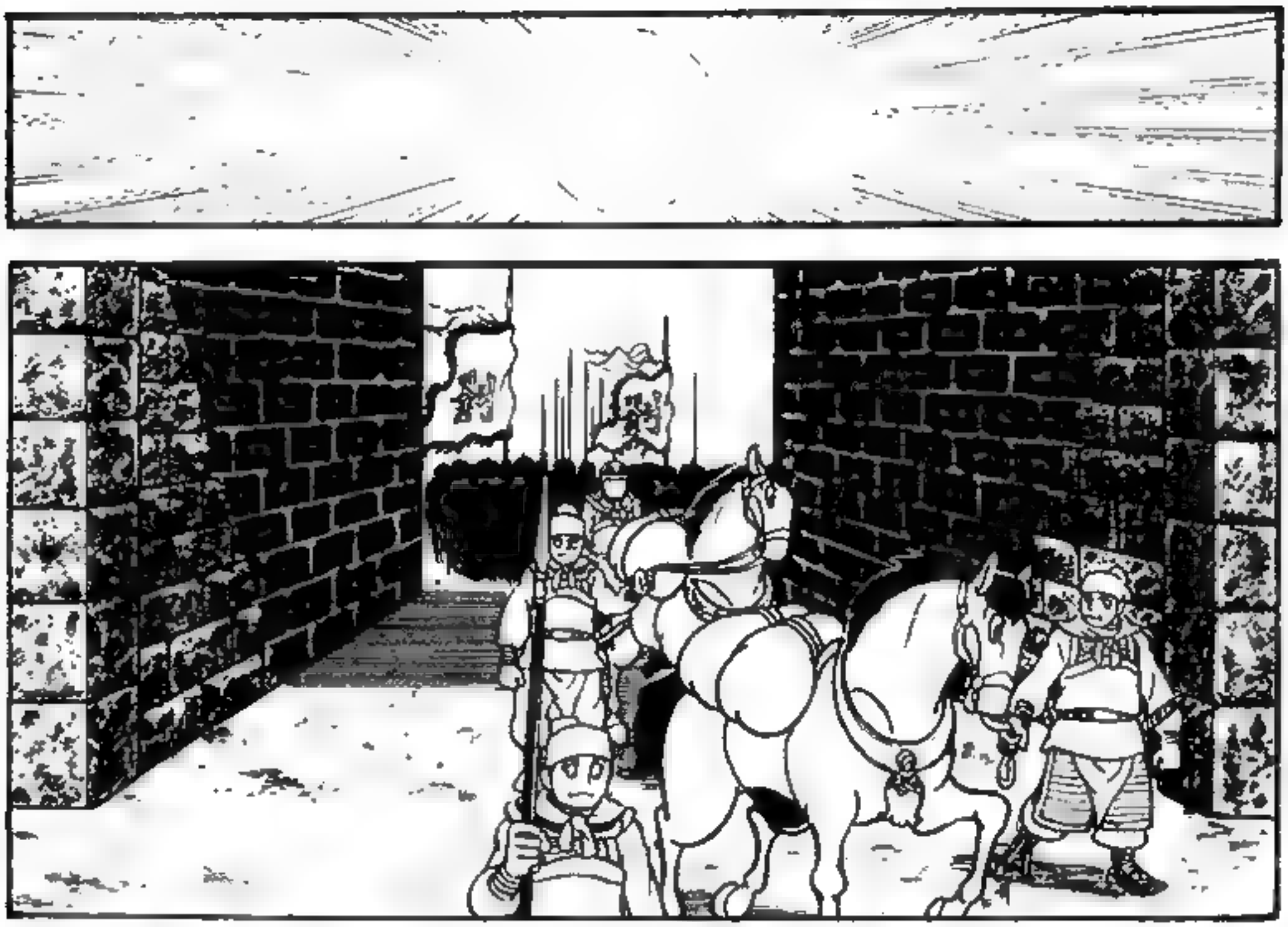
THERE'S ALSO SOMETHING ELSE I'VE DECIDED.

AND IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT XINYE CASTLE OF XIANGYANG NEEDS PROTECTION. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO THERE AND FORTIFY IT WITH YOUR SOLDIERS?

I WAS THINKING THAT YOUR CURRENT SEDENTARY LIFE-STYLE MIGHT NOT EXACTLY BEFIT THE GALLANT WARRIOR YOU ARE.

GOOD, GOOD. I SHALL BE DEPENDING ON YOU THEN.

GLADLY, SIR. I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY.



I'VE COME TO SEE YOU OFF, SIR.

AH, THANK YOU, YI JI.

AND WHAT DID HE SAY?

BY THE WAY, A MAN NAMED KUAI YUE HAPPENED TO COMMENT UPON THAT HORSE TO LIU BIAO.

I WOULD ADVISE SIR TO RIDE A DIFFERENT HORSE.

APPARENTLY, THOSE 4 WHITE LEGS AND THE WHITE SPOT ON ITS HEAD ARE CLEAR SIGNS OF A HEXED HORSE, SAID TO BRING BAD FORTUNE TO ITS RIDER.

OH, IS THAT SO?

BUT THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERNS.

WELL, I MYSELF AM NOT A SUPERSTITIOUS MAN.

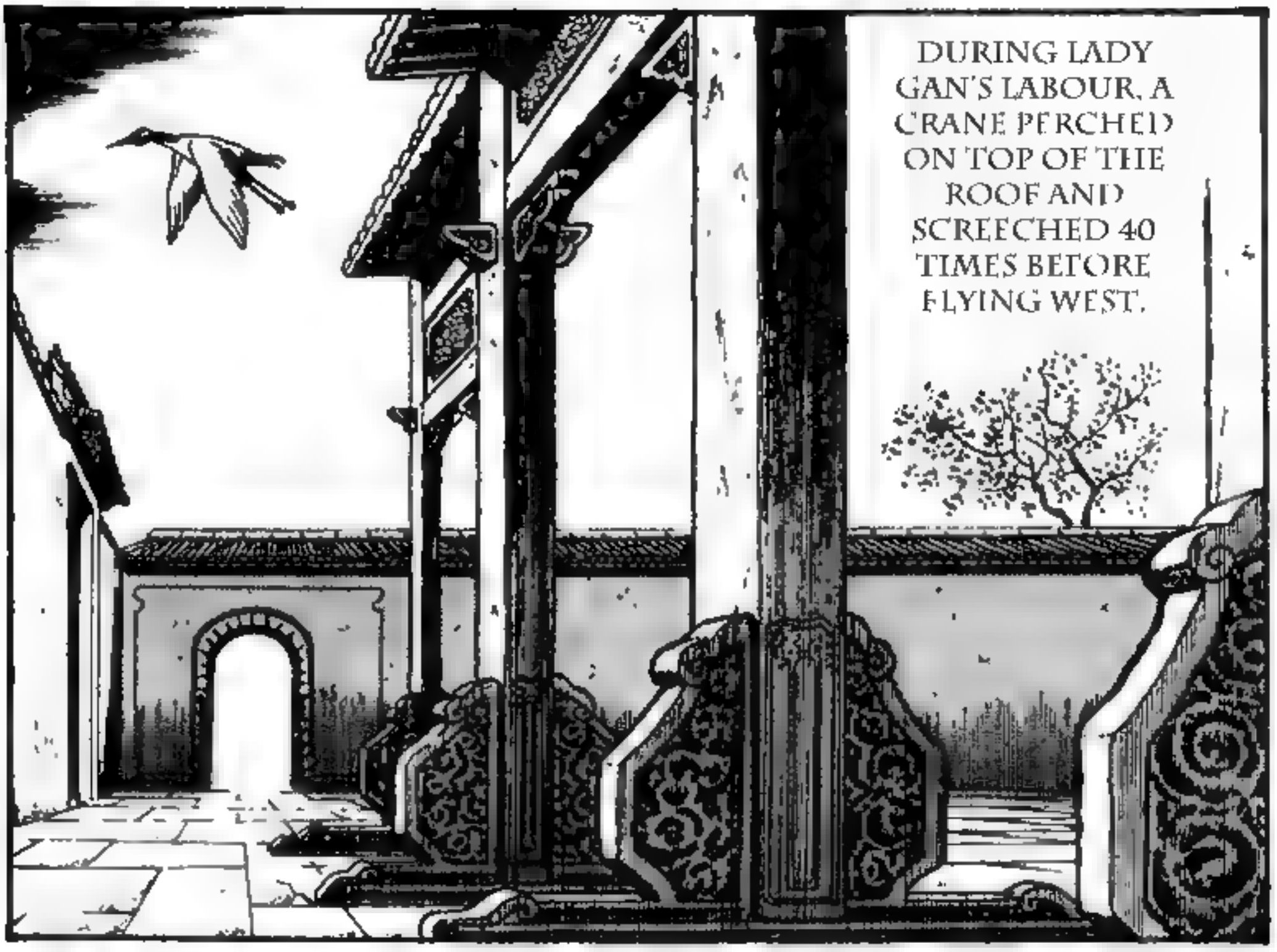
THUS, LIU BEI AND HIS MEN SET FORTH FOR XINYE.

I PRAY NOTHING BAD HAPPENS...

XINYE WAS A SMALL CASTLE OUT IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE

HIS WIFE, LADY GAN, GAVE BIRTH TO A BOY.

BUT DURING HIS STAY HERE, A JOYOUS EVENT OCCURRED



NOT ONLY THAT, LADY GAN HAD ALSO DREAMT THAT SHE SWALLOWED THE BIG DIPPER DURING HER PREGNANCY
THUS, THE BOY WAS APTLY NAMED ADOU*

*ADOU (阿斗) IS WRITTEN WITH THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR THE BIG DIPPER. KEEP IN MIND THAT ADOU IS HIS INFANT NAME, AND HE WILL BE LATER KNOWN AS LIU SHAN

SPRING CAME TO HI NAN ALONG WITH THE CONTINUING PEACE

AS LIU BIAO CAME TO RELY ON XUANDE MORE AND MORE, LIU BIAO CALLED XUANDE OUT FROM XINYE MORE FREQUENTLY

?

IT'S ABOUT FAMILY MATTERS...

I CAN HEAR YOU OUT, IF YOU'D LIKE.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE CAUSE FOR YOUR DISTRESS?

WELL, AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE TWO SONS. ONE IS LIU QI, BORN FROM MY FIRST WIFE, LADY CHEN.

THOUGH LIU QI IS A SMART ONE, HIS BODY IS RATHER SICKLY AND FRAIL.

THE OTHER IS LIU SONG, BORN FROM MY SECOND WIFE, LADY CAI.

THAT IS A MATTER NOT EVEN WORTH PONDERING, SIR.

BECAUSE OF THAT, THERE HAS BEEN SOME DEBATE ABOUT PLACING MY SECOND SON, LIU CONG, AS MY HEIR INSTEAD. PERSONALLY, I'M AT A LOSS AS TO WHAT TO DO.

OVERTURNING THAT SHALL ONLY INVITE DISORDER AND CHAOS.

IT IS TRADITION FOR THE FIRST BORN SON TO BE THE HEIR.

HMM, THAT'S TRUE. IF I NAMED LIU SONG AS MY HEIR RIGHT NOW, THE CHEN FAMILY WOULD NOT SIT STILL.

NATURALLY.

MY STATE WOULD BECOME DIVIDED IN TWO.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ADVICE.

HAHA, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I DO FEEL RATHER FOOLISH FOR WORRYING OVER SUCH A SIMPLE MATTER.

THAT LIU BIAO HAS TOLD OUR LORD TO NAME LIU QI AS THE HEIR.

WHAT!?

WHAT IS IT?

BROTHER! THERE'S TROUBLE!

HE AGREED WITH LIU BEI WHOLE-HEARTEDLY. AT THIS RATE, MY SON WILL BECOME NOTHING!

AND OUR LORD?

HE SAID IT'S ONLY RIGHT FOR THE FIRST BORN TO BE THE HEIR.

THAT WILL BE QUITE DIFFICULT, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING HOW MUCH OUR LORD TRUSTS LIU BEI'S OPINION.

ISN'T THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?

I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED. OUR LORD HAS BECOME TOO TRUSTING OF LIU BEI AS OF LATE.

AS IN WHAT?

BUT IF WE ARE TO DO ANYTHING, WE MUST FIRST DO SOMETHING ABOUT LIU BEI.

AND IT WOULD BE BEST TO ALSO DO SOMETHING ABOUT LIU QI SO THAT HE DIES AN EARLY DEATH.

AS IN KILLING HIM.

WHEN SHALL WE KILL HIM THEN?

IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO KILL LIU BEI ONCE HE RETURNS TO XINYE.

ONLY THEN CAN OUR LIU SONG BE MADE RULER OF JINGZHOU.

THE BEST CHANCE IS TONIGHT.

I'LL GATHER MY SOLDIERS.

I HEARD GENERAL CAI MAO WAS PLANNING TO MAKE A HIT ON LIU BEI TONIGHT.

HMM? THE GUARDS SEEM TO BE IN A RUSH. I WONDER WHAT'S GOING ON?

THAT TRUST IS THE VERY REASON.

W-WHY WOULD CAI MAO KILL OUR LORD'S MOST TRUSTED...

IT SURE IS.

WHAT! IS THAT TRUE!?

BUT IS HE REALLY AS TRUSTWORTHY AS HE SEEMS? AT VARIOUS POINTS IN HIS LIFE, LIU BEI HAS ALLIED HIMSELF WITH LU BU, CAO CAO, AND YUAN SHAO.

OUR LORD DOES WHATEVER LIU BEI ADVISES THESE DAYS, DOESN'T HE?

THAT'S RIDICU-LOUS!

BUT LIU BEI BETRAYED ALL OF THEM. CAI MAO IS WORRIED THAT LIU BEI MIGHT DO THE SAME TO OUR LORD.

IS LU BU A VIRTUOUS MAN? IS CAO CAO A LOYAL RETAINER OF HAN? IS YUAN SHAO A HERO FIT TO SAVE THIS CHAOTIC WORLD? OF COURSE NOT!

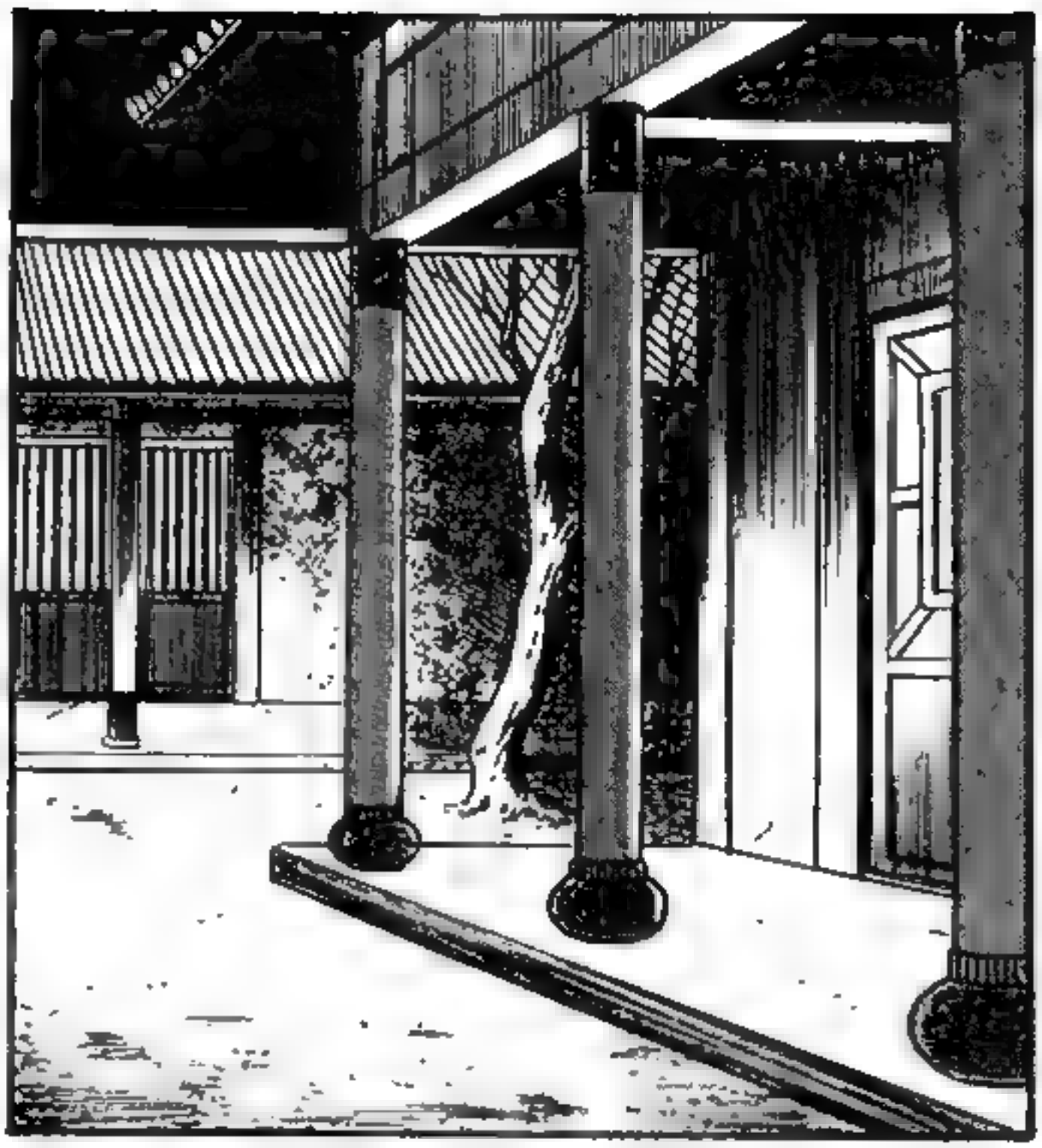
YOU FOOL!

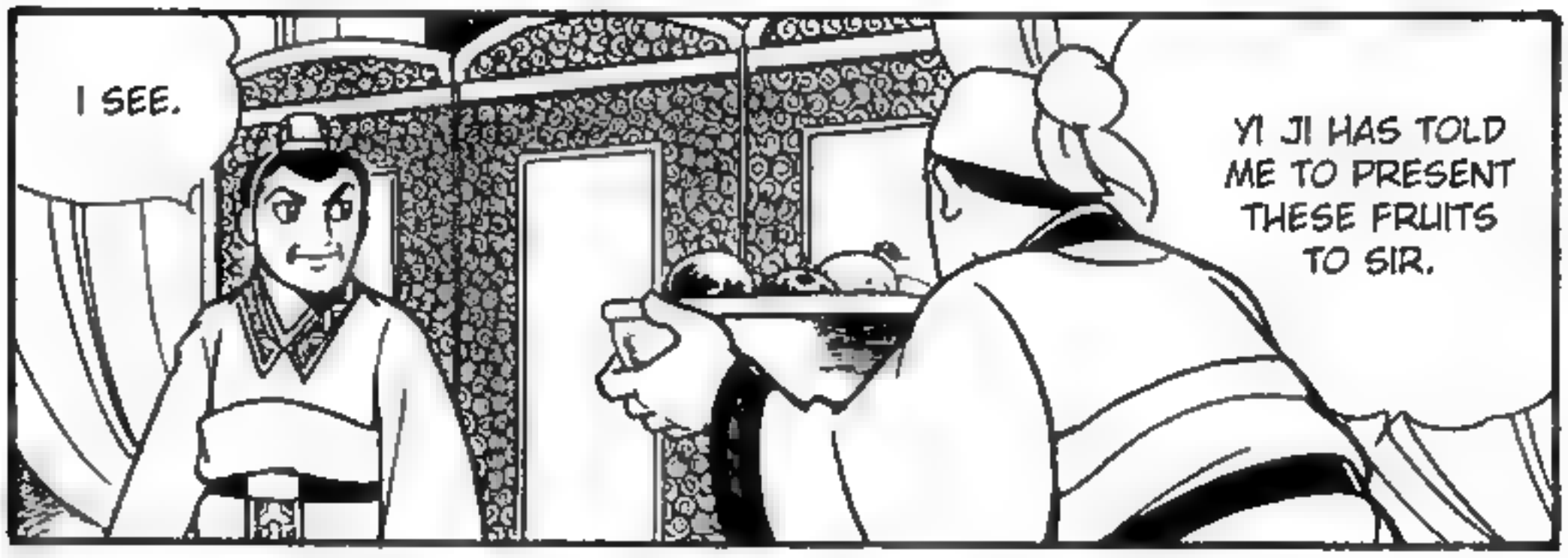
WELL... THAT'S JUST LIKE... YOUR OPINION, YI JI.

NOW, NOW. CALM DOWN. WHO ARE WE TO GO AGAINST CAI MAO AND INVOLVE OURSELVES IN THIS MESSY AFFAIR?

.....

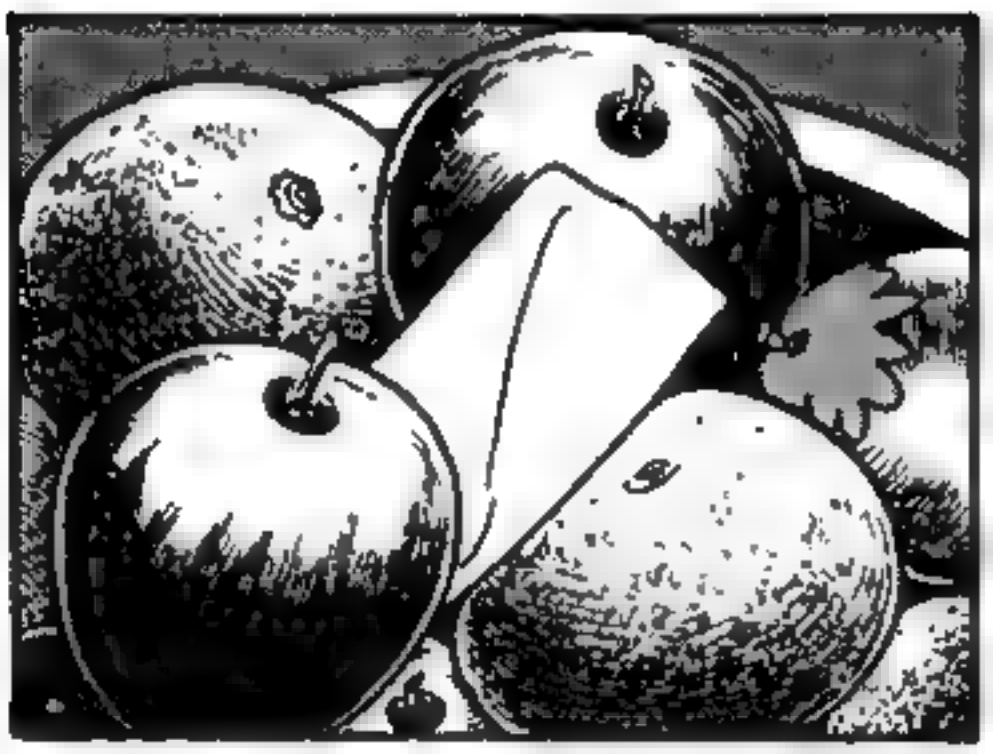
WHETHER OR NOT LIU BEI'S ALIVE, JINGZHOU WILL BE JINGZHOU.




I SEE.
YI JI HAS TOLD ME TO PRESENT THESE FRUITS TO SIR.

HM?

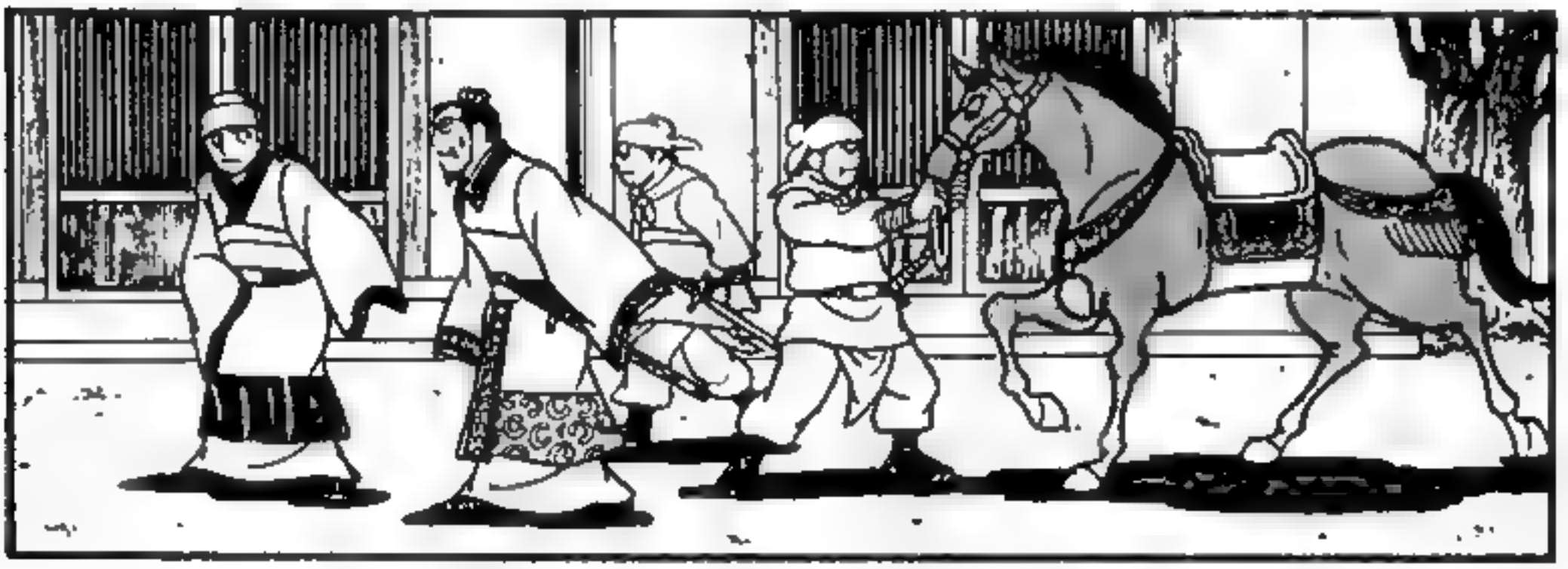
I MUST THANK THAT YI JI FOR ALL HIS KINDNESS.



WE MUST LEAVE HERE SILENTLY AT ONCE.

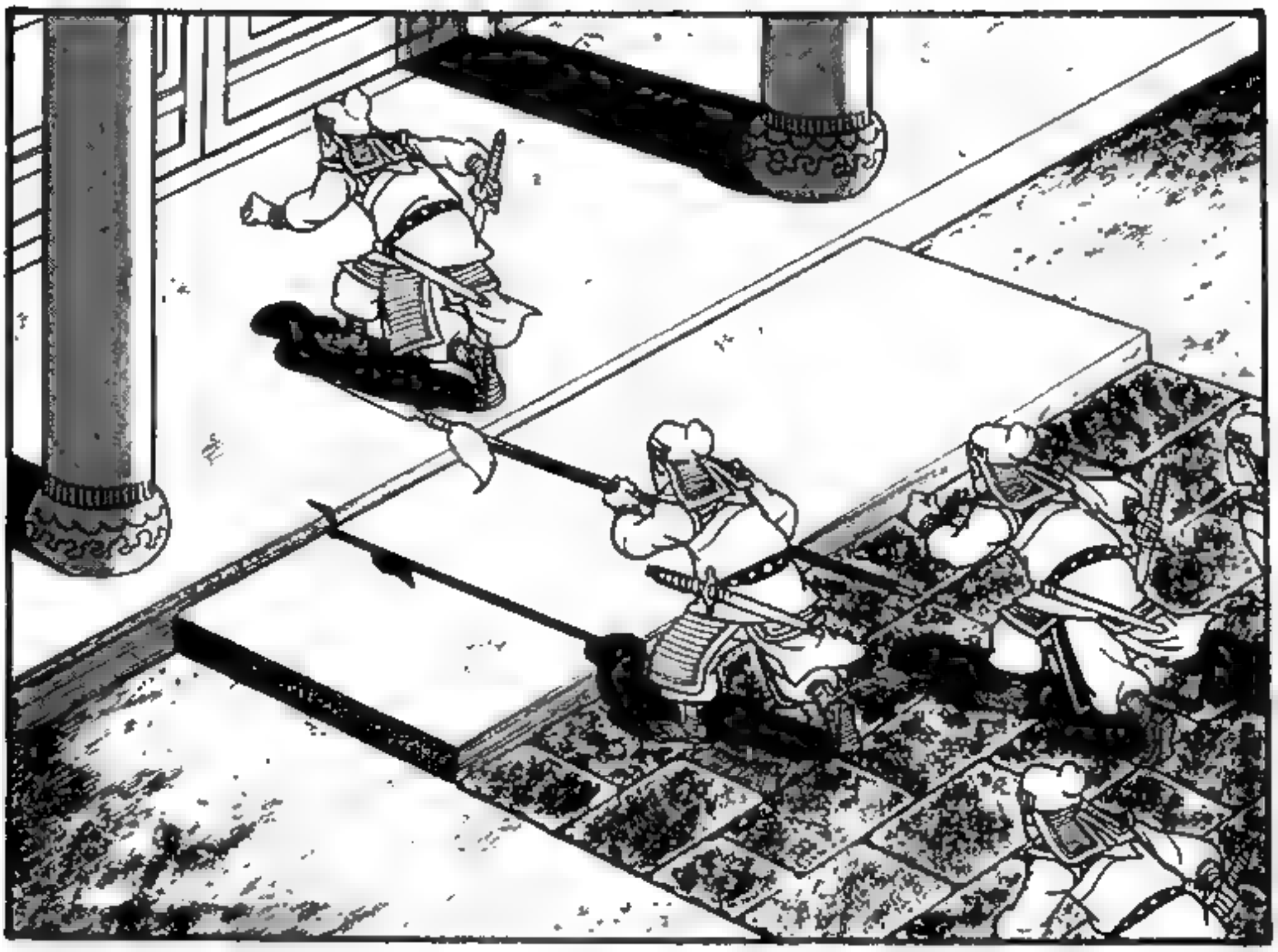
IT SEEMS THAT CAI MAO IS PLANNING TO ASSASSINATE ME TONIGHT.
WHAT IS IT, MY LORD?

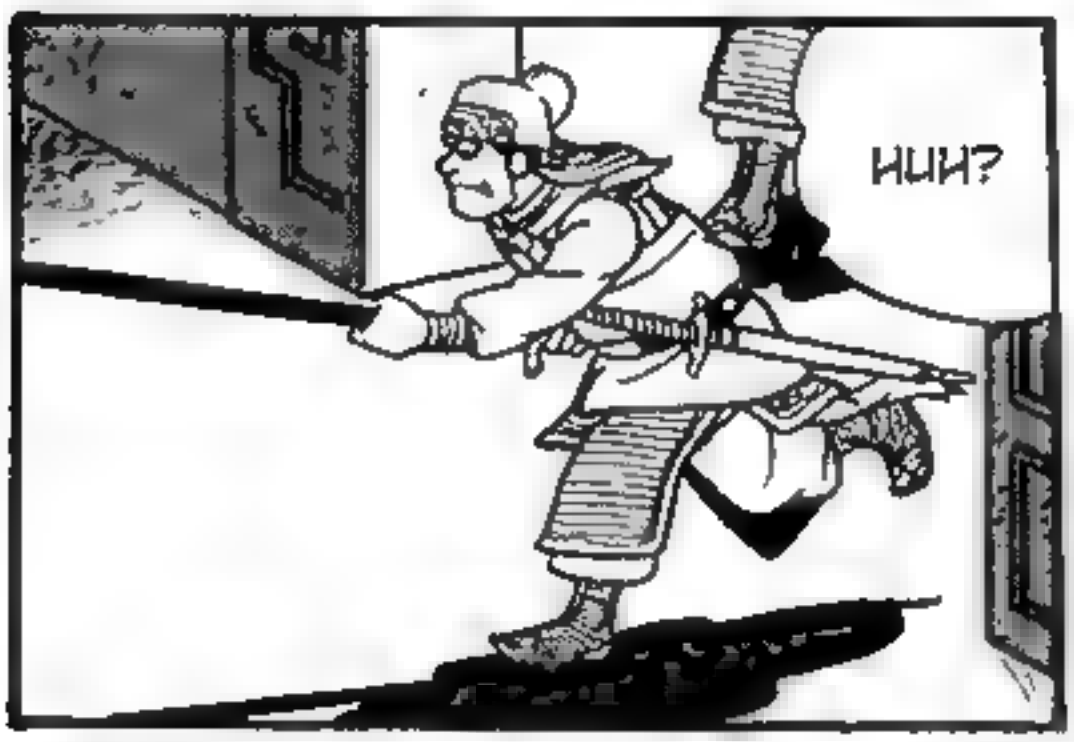
Y-YES, SIR!



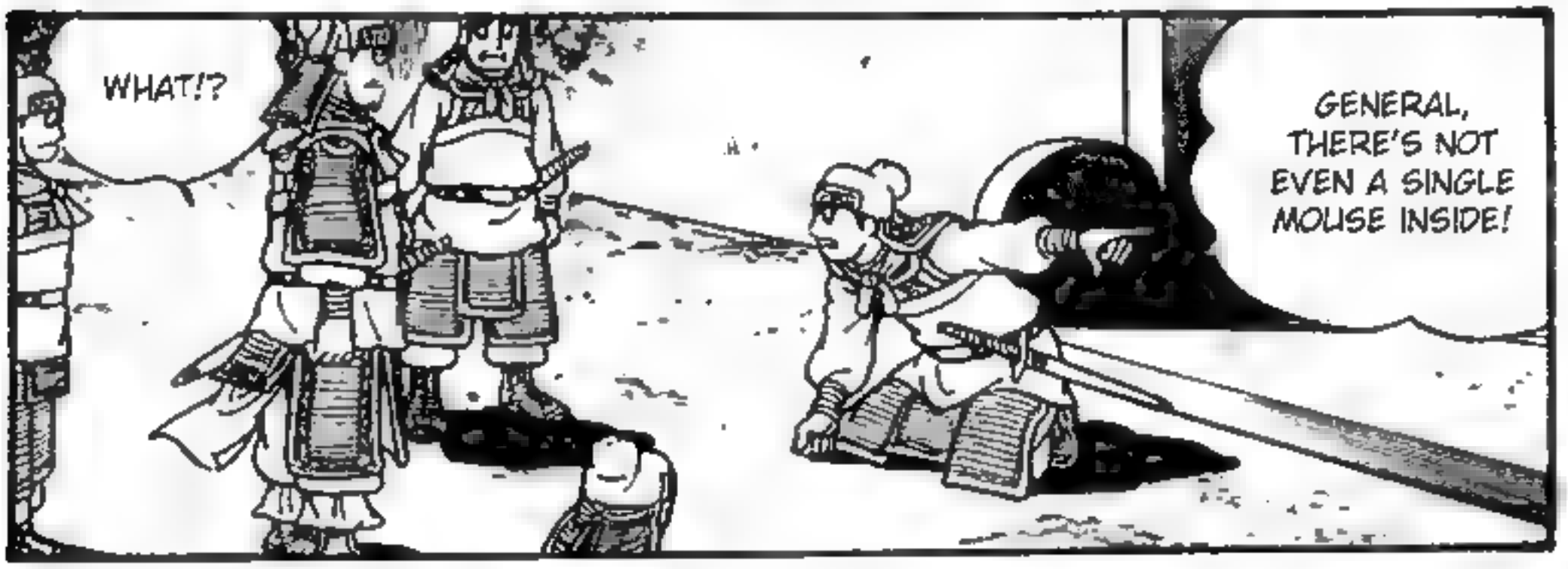
MAKE SURE TO NOT LET HIM ESCAPE.

NOW!



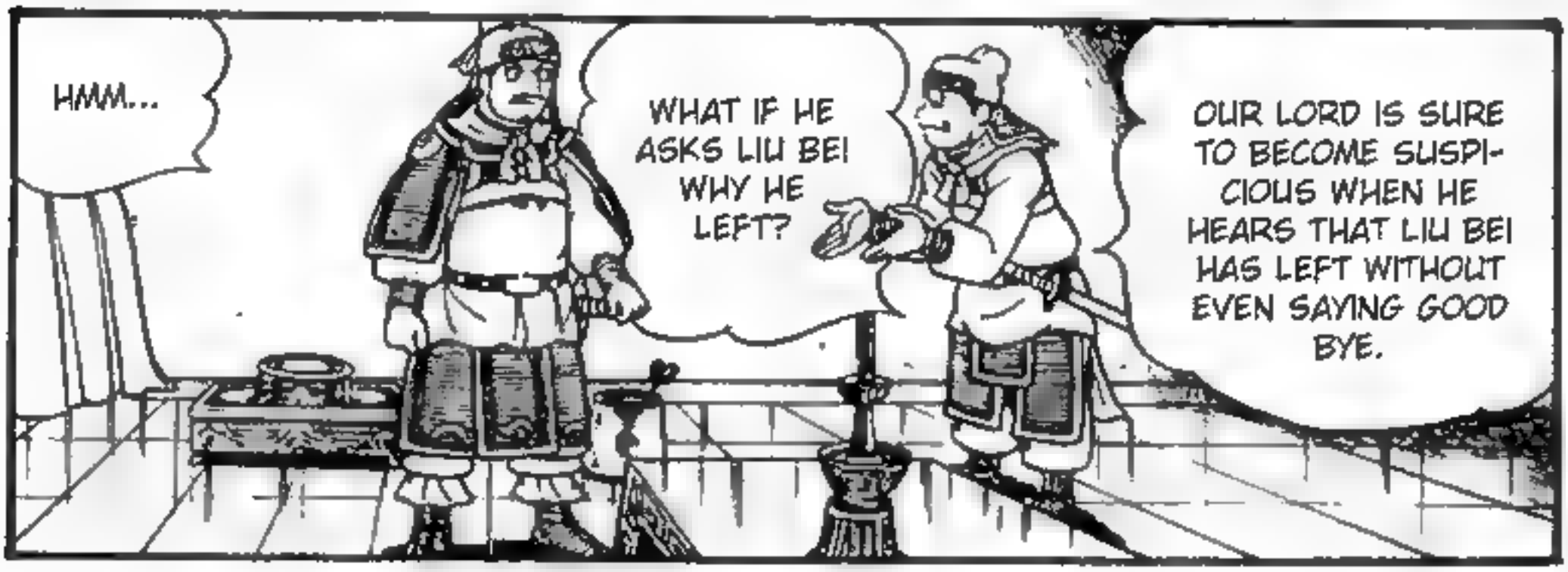

HUH?

HM?


WHAT!?
GENERAL, THERE'S NOT EVEN A SINGLE MOUSE INSIDE!

WHAT DO WE DO NOW, GENERAL?

HE MUST'VE CAUGHT ON...!


HMM...
WHAT IF HE ASKS LIU BEI WHY HE LEFT?
OUR LORD IS SURE TO BECOME SUSPICIOUS WHEN HE HEARS THAT LIU BEI HAS LEFT WITHOUT EVEN SAYING GOOD BYE.

龍困

I HAVE JUST THE IDEA. HAND ME A BRUSH.

WE SHALL REPORT TO OUR LORD THAT LIU BEI LEFT THIS POEM BEFORE LEAVING.

龍困淺沼
伸縮不自由
一旦得雨澤

BUT NOW, THE SOUNDS OF GALE REACH HIS EARS.

RIDING ON THUNDER, HE MUST NOW ASCEND TO THE HEAVENS.

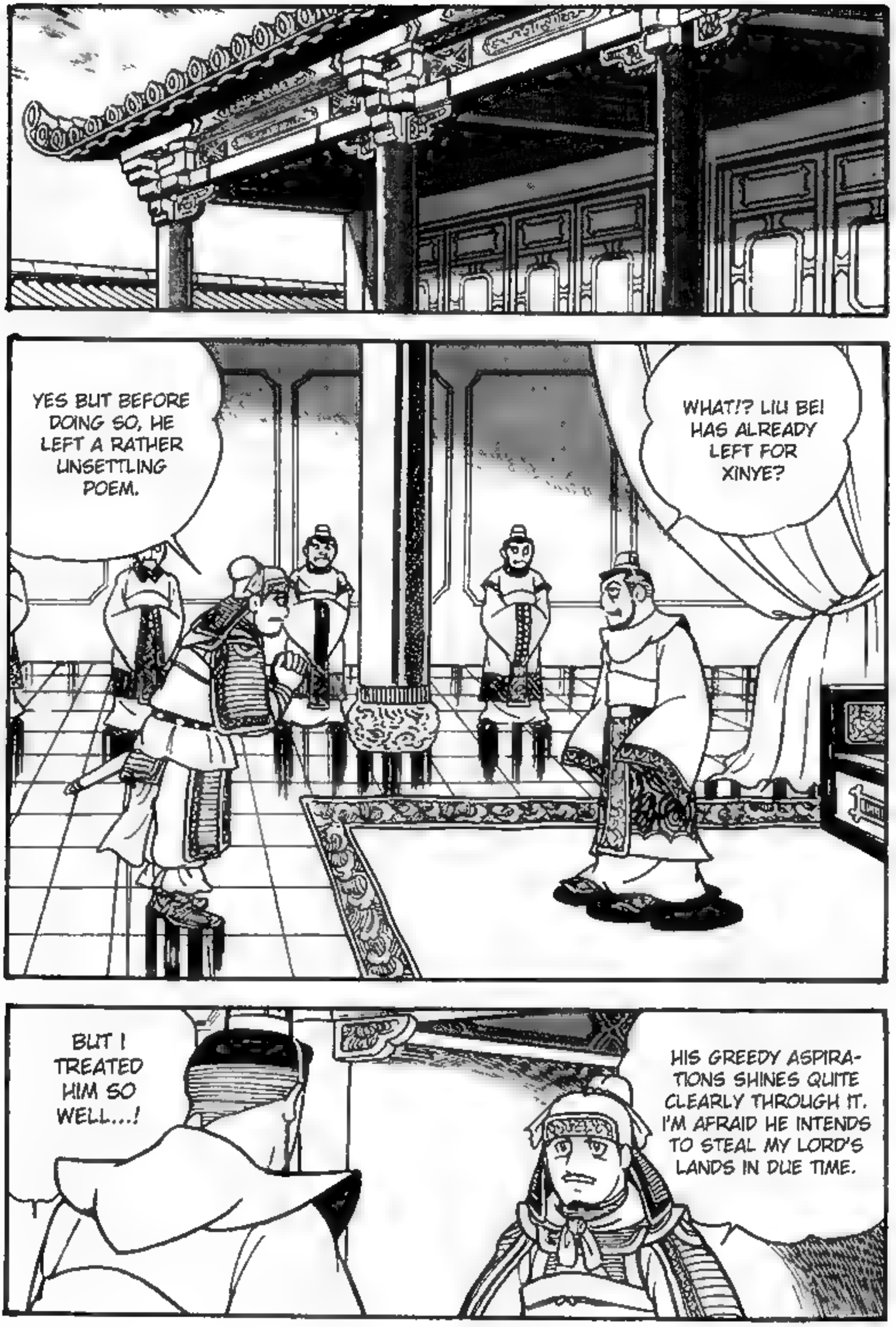
THE MIGHTY DRAGON, EVEN WHEN IN A POND, A MERE FISH HE CANNOT BE.

FOR FAR TOO LONG, HAS HIS TIME BEEN WASTED.

I SEE!

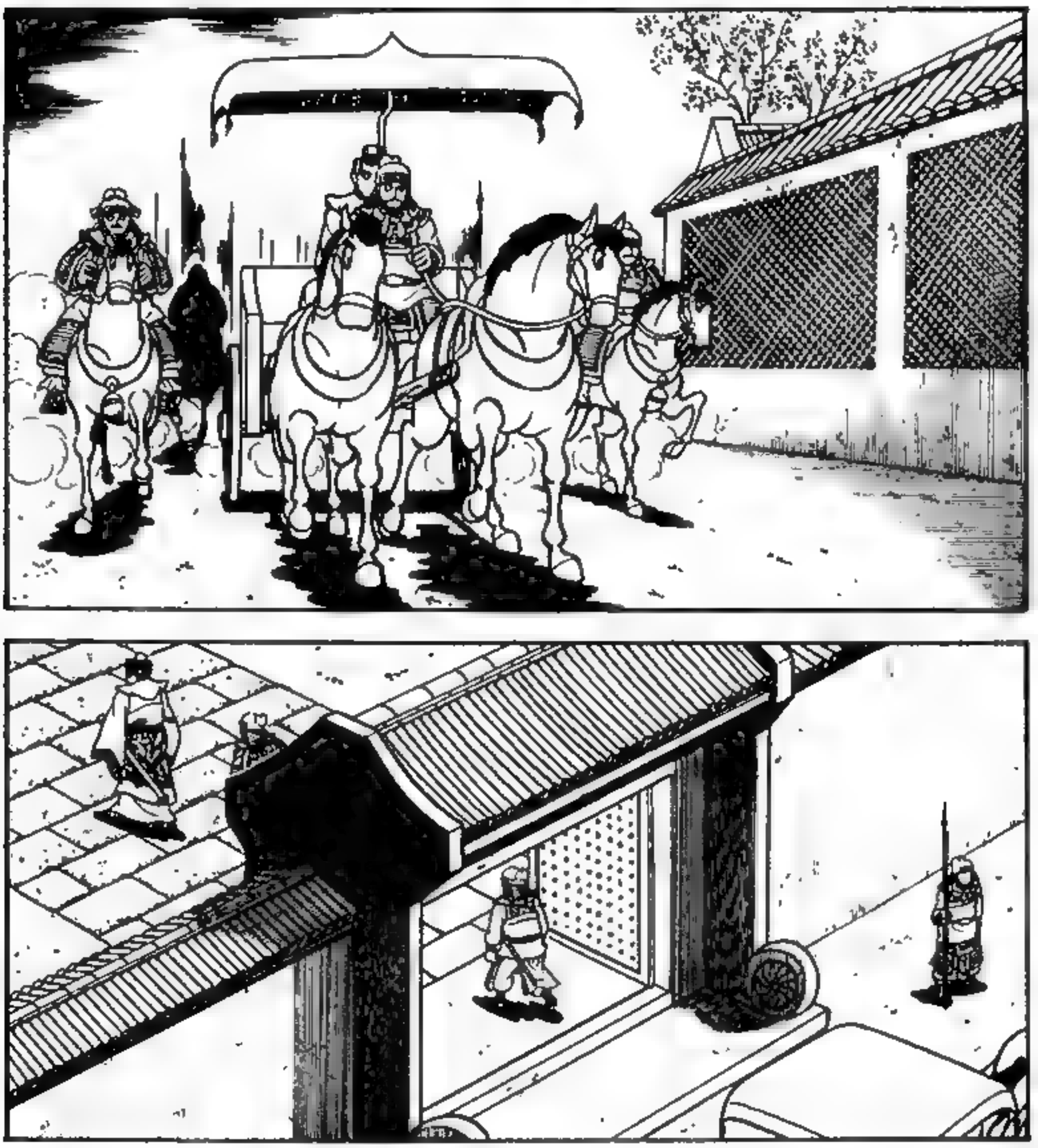
THAT IS WHEN I WILL SUGGEST GETTING RID OF LIU BEI BEFORE HE ASPIRES TO TAKE OVER OUR NATION.

WITH THIS, OUR LORD WILL SURELY BE SHOCKED.


YES BUT BEFORE DOING SO, HE LEFT A RATHER UNSETTLING POEM.
WHAT!? LIU BEI HAS ALREADY LEFT FOR XINYE?
BUT I TREATED HIM SO WELL...!
HIS GREEDY ASPIRATIONS SHINES QUITE CLEARLY THROUGH IT. I'M AFRAID HE INTENDS TO STEAL MY LORD'S LANDS IN DUE TIME.

BRING ME MY CARRIAGE!

PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST FOR MY LORD TO SEE THE POEM FIRSTHAND.



THIS WAY, MY LORD.

龍困囚池中，
伸腰不自由，
一聲雷雨發，

SO THIS IS THE POEM?

WHY THAT UNGRATE-FUL...!

I'VE ALREADY GATHERED OUR ARMY. WE CAN MARCH ONTO XINYE AT YOUR WORD.

HIS AMBITIONS ARE EVIDENT FROM THIS POEM, IS IT NOT? WE MUST STRIKE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE BEFORE HE BUILDS ANY MORE POWER.

WHY DOES MY LORD HESI-TATE SO?

NO, WAIT.

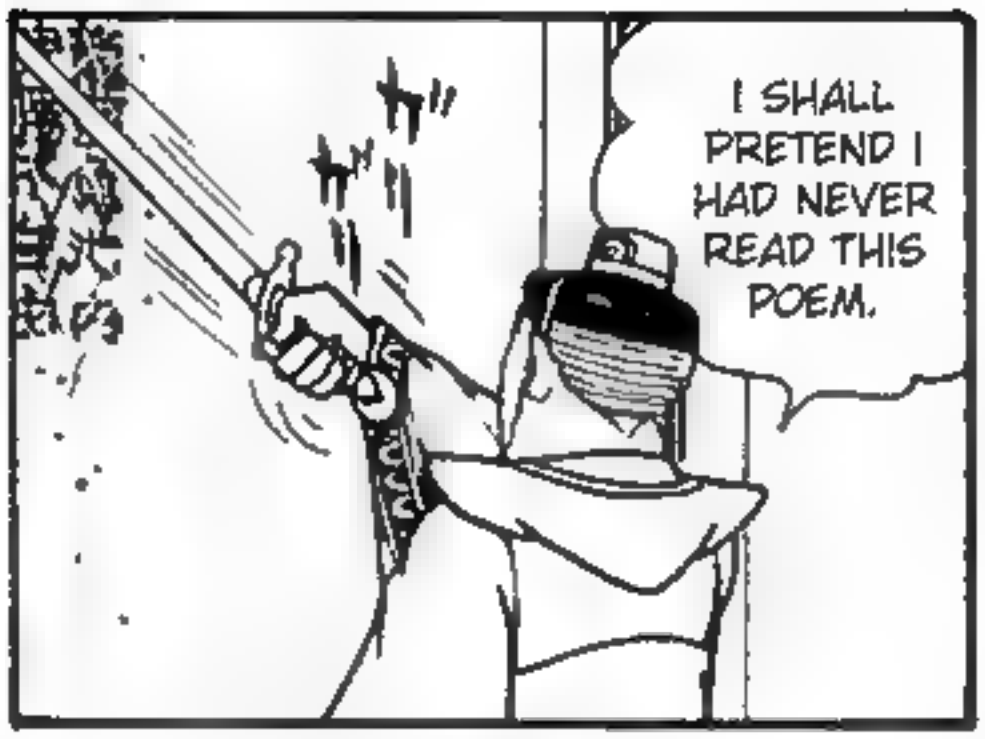
I'VE BEEN CLOSE FRIENDS WITH HIM FOR MANY YEARS AND I HAVE NEVER ONCE SEEN HIM COMPOSE EVEN A SINGLE LINE OF POETRY.

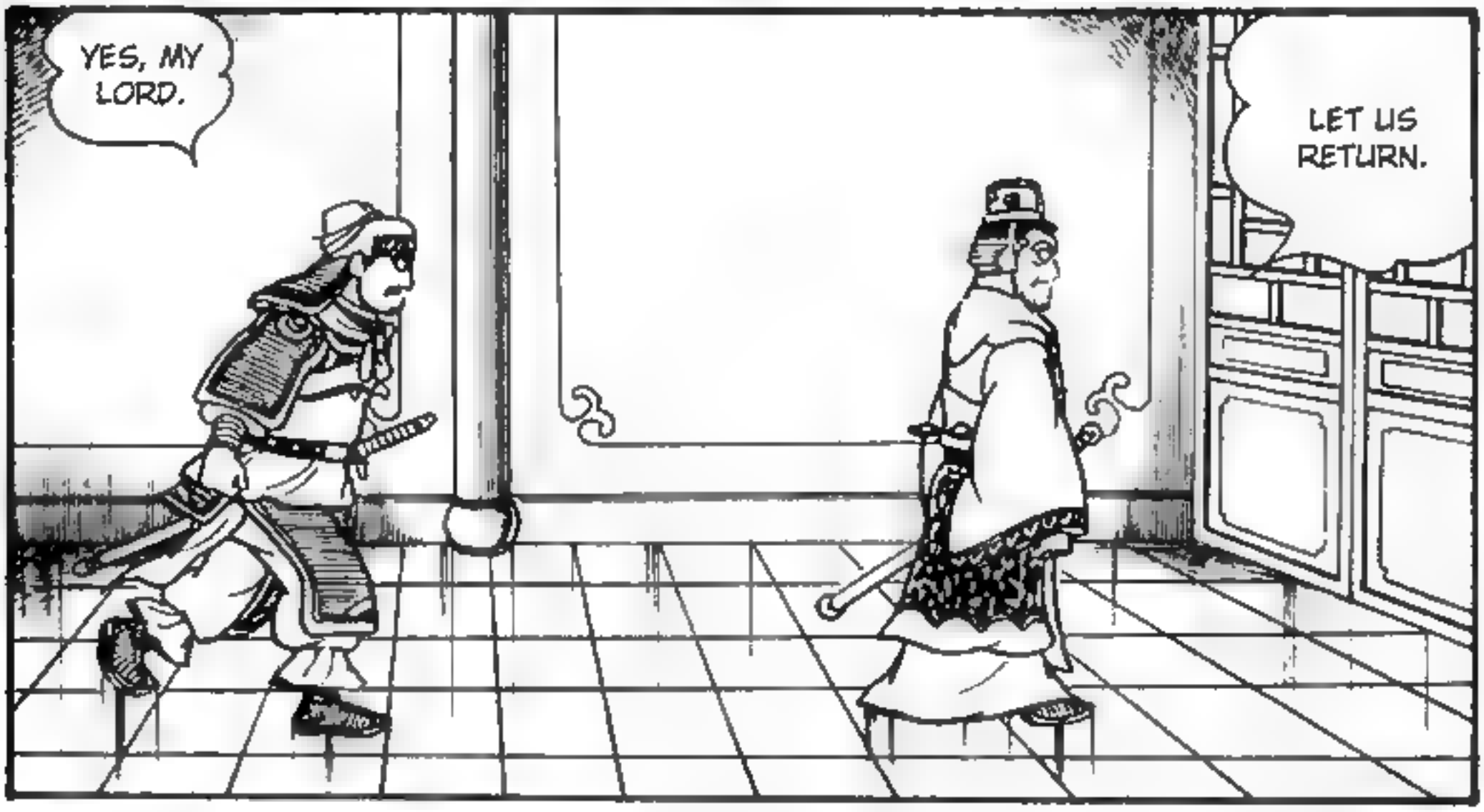
WHAT!?

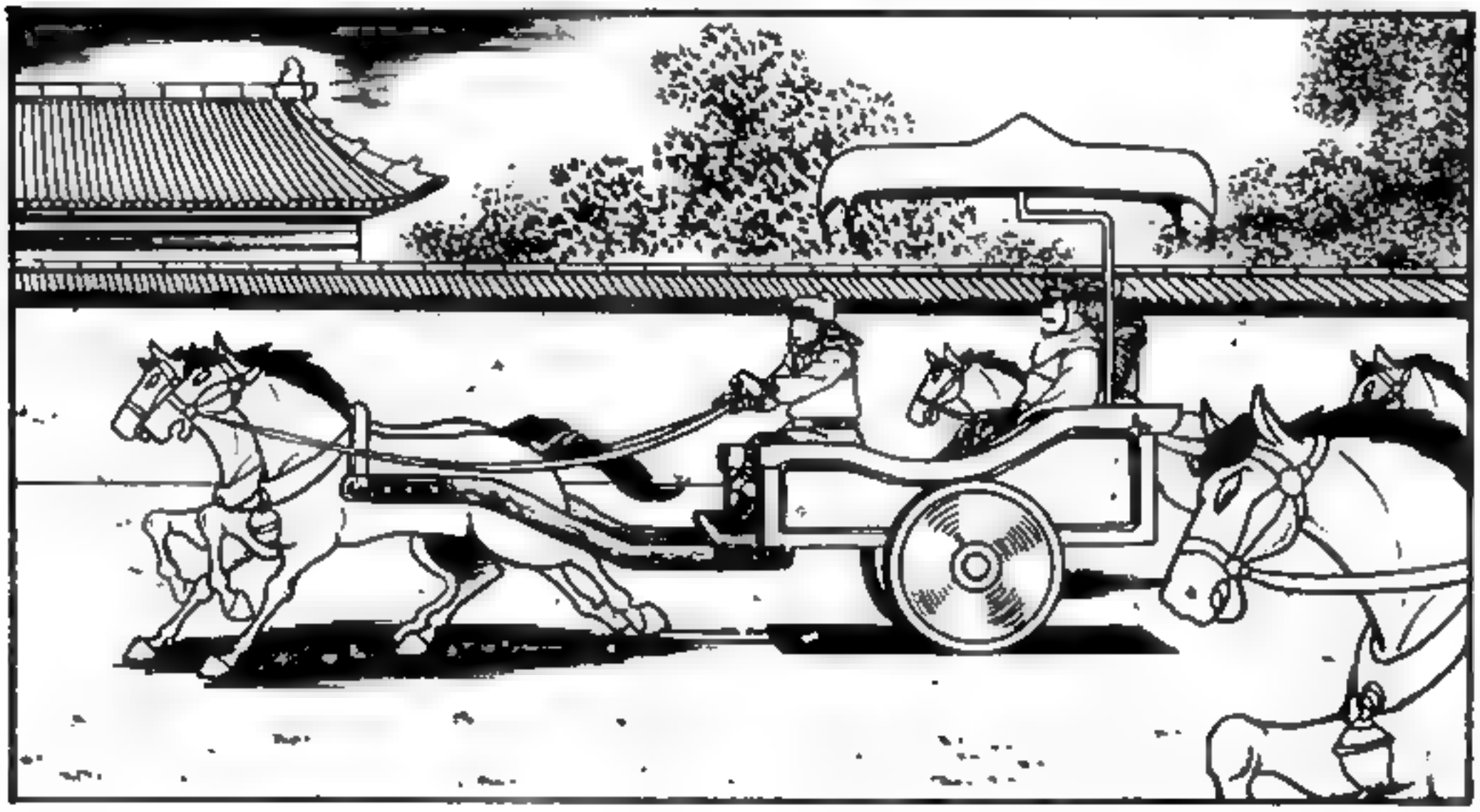
LIU BEI MIGHT NOT HAVE WRITTEN THIS POEM.

チャ!!

THIS MIGHT BE SOMEONE'S PLOY TO TURN US AGAINST EACH OTHER.


I SHALL PRETEND I HAD NEVER READ THIS POEM.


YES, MY LORD.
LET US RETURN.



HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE.

SO YOU HEARD, DID YOU?

BROTHER, I HEARD THE PLAN FAILED.

THEN WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS PLAN...?

TRY AGAIN, OF COURSE.

WHAT IS IT? I'M NOT FEELING TOO WELL SO KEEP IT BRIEF.

MY LORD, THERE IS SOMETHING I WISH TO SUGGEST.

THE CROPS HAVE BEEN PLENTIFUL FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW AND THE CITIZENS ARE ALL OVERJOYED AT THE EXCEPTIONAL HARVEST THIS FALL.

IT WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE JINGZHOU'S POWER, THEREBY DETERRING ANYONE WHO THINKS THEY CAN CAPTURE JINGZHOU EASILY.

AND SO I WAS THINKING IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO INVITE MANY IMPORTANT HAN OFFICIALS FOR THE FALL HARVEST FESTIVAL AT XIANGYANG THIS YEAR.

BUT I'M AFRAID I DO NOT FEEL WELL ENOUGH TO ATTEND THE FESTIVAL MYSELF.

YES, THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.

GOOD IDEA.

THEN WHY NOT SEND LIU BEI IN SIR'S STEAD?

YES, SIR.

SEND OUT INVITATIONS TO OFFICIALS OF THE LANDS.

THANK YOU, CAI MAO.

THEN I SHALL MAKE THE NECCESSARY PREPARA-TIONS.

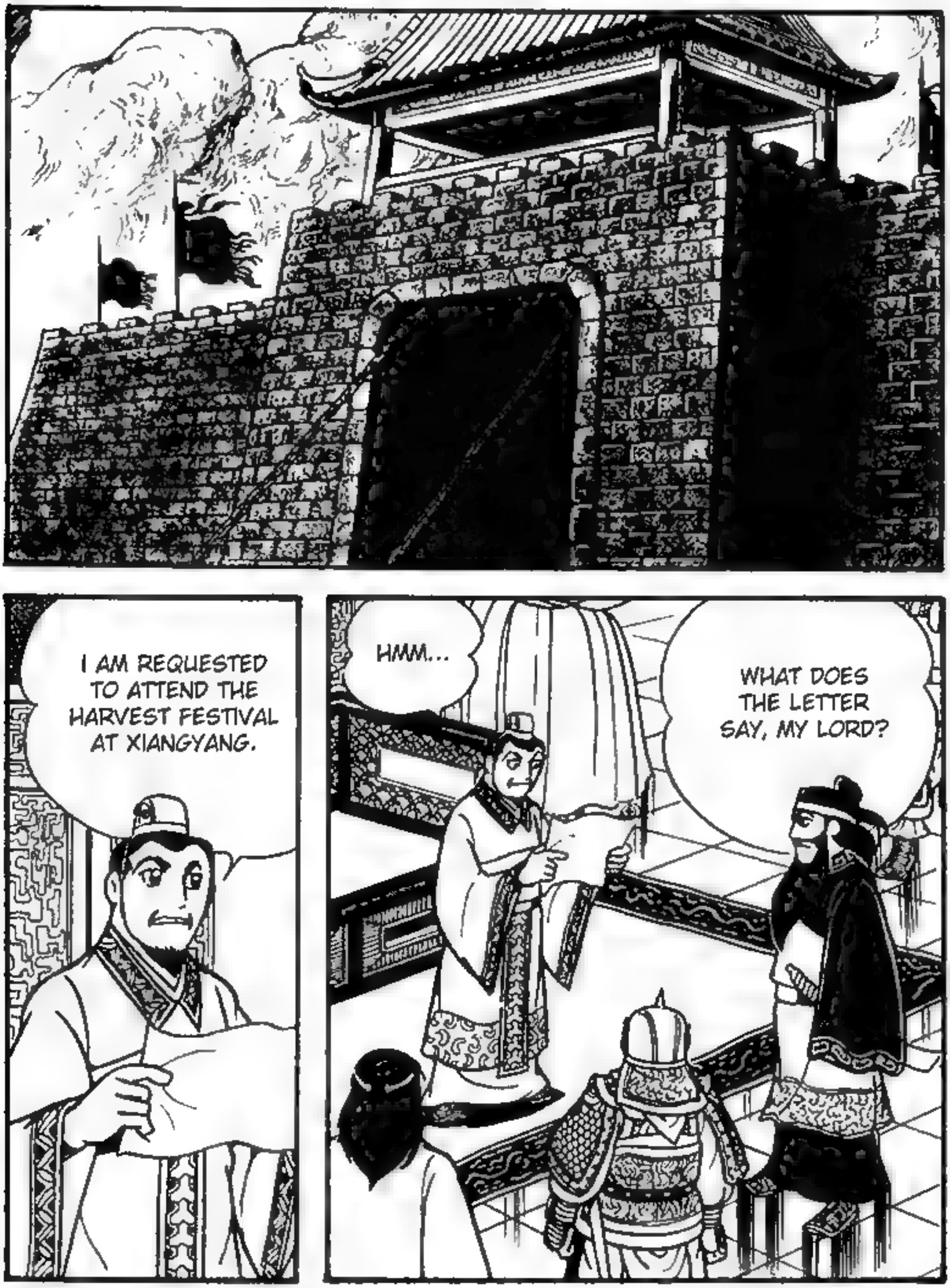
LIU BEI WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ATTEND NOW.

QUITE WELL. OUR LORD AGREED TO THE WHOLE THING.

HOW DID IT GO, BROTHER?

WE CAN WORRY ABOUT MAKING UP SOME EXCUSE AFTER WE'VE KILLED HIM.

CROSSING THE TAN TORRENT



WELL... TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, CAI MAO TRIED TO KILL ME DURING MY LAST VISIT.

WELL ISN'T THAT GREAT NEWS?

CAI MAO DID WHAT!?

WHAT!?

THAT SON OF A...! LET ME GO AND CUT OFF THAT FOOL'S HEAD RIGHT NOW!

IT WAS ONLY THANKS TO YI JI WARNING ME THAT I WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE SAFELY.

IF I REFUSE NOW, LIU BIAO WILL SURELY COME TO DISTRUST ME MORE.

I'M AFRAID IT'S NOT SO SIMPLE. AFTER HOW I ABRUPTLY LEFT WITHOUT SAYING GOOD BYE, I'M AFRAID THAT LIU BIAO MIGHT BE SUSPICIOUS OF ME.

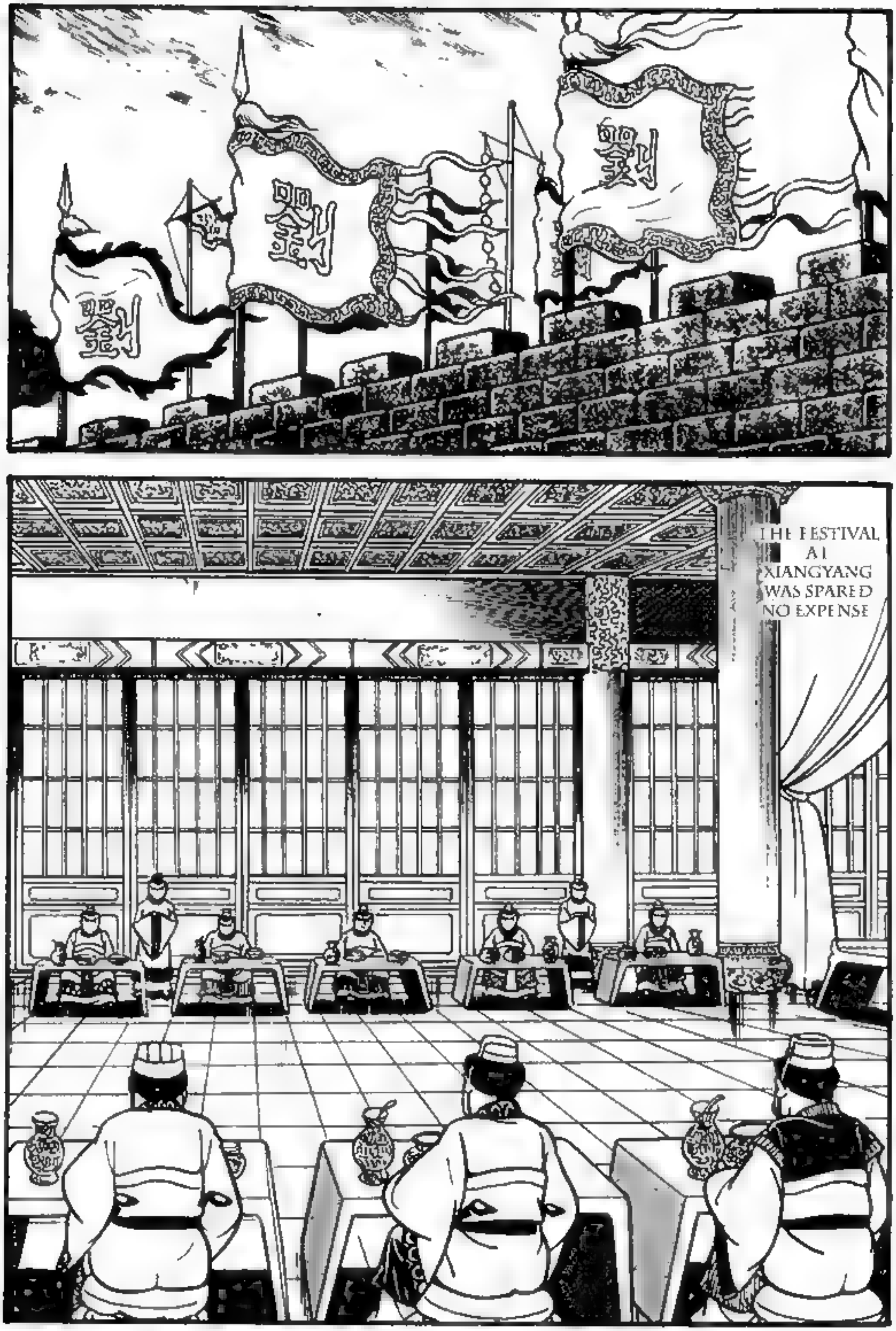
AND YOU SHOULD REJECT THE INVITATION AS WELL!

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
THAT'S TRUE. IT WOULD BE VERY ODD IF MY LORD DID NOT GO, CONSIDERING HOW CLOSE XIANGYANG IS FROM HERE. LIU BIAO WOULD MORE THAN LIKELY BECOME DISTRUSTING.

AH, YES. I'D FEEL MUCH SAFER IF YOU'RE WITH ME.

IF MY LORD HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO ATTEND, THEN ALLOW ME AND 300 SOLDIERS TO ESCORT YOU.

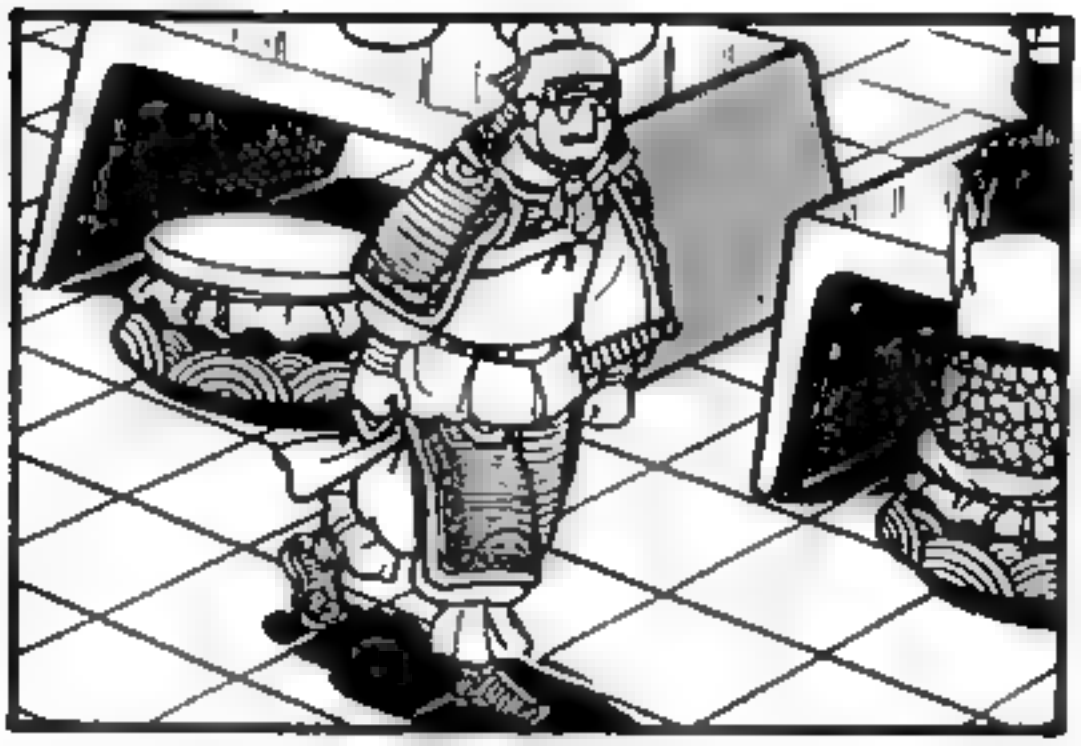
AND SO, LIU BEI LEFT FOR XIANG-YANG, ESCORTED BY ZHAO YUN.


THE FESTIVAL AT XIANGYANG WAS SPARED NO EXPENSE

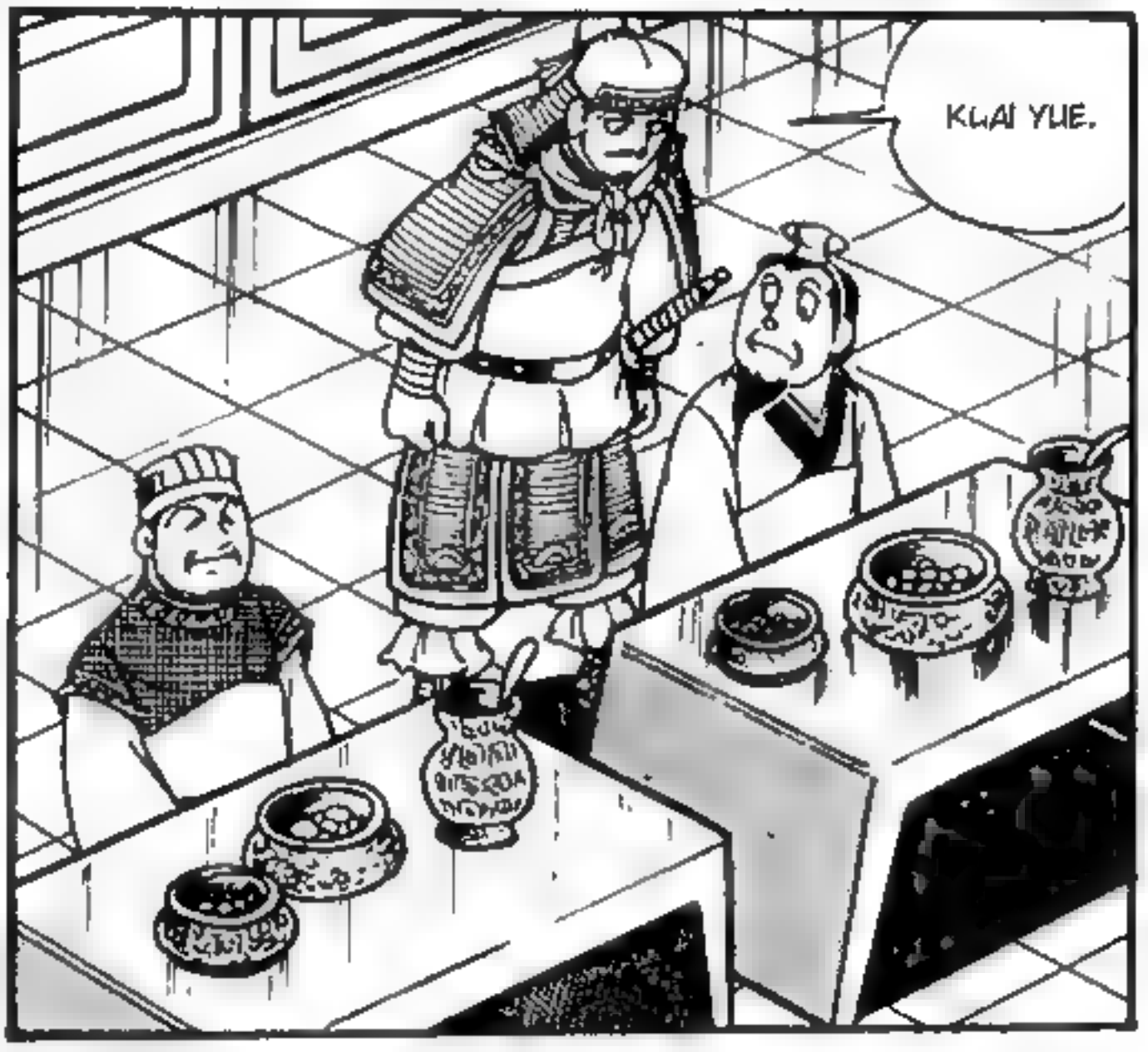
COUNTLESS OF GENERALS AND MINIS-TERS FROM AROUND THE LAND ATTENDED

STANDING RIGHT BEHIND HIM WAS ZHAO YUN, EVER VIGILANT AS TO PREPARE FOR ANY TROUBLES

AND IT WAS LIU BEI'S DUTY TO RECEIVE THE GUESTS IN PLACE OF LIU BIAO



COME WITH ME FOR A MINUTE.


KUAI YUE.

THE TRUTH IS THAT LIU BEI IS SECRETLY PLOTTING TO DEPOSE OUR LORD AND BECOME JINGZHOU'S RULER.

WHAT IS IT, GENERAL CAI MAO?

I'M AFRAID IT IS.

W-WHAT? THAT CAN'T BE...

WELL, IF THAT IS OUR LORD'S ORDERS...

WHAT'S MORE, I HAVE ALREADY BEEN GRANTED PERMISSION FROM OUR LORD TO SECRETLY DISPATCH LIU BEI. WHAT I REQUIRE FROM YOU IS YOUR ASSITANCE.

BUT LIU BEI IS A WELL RESPECTED MAN. IF WE KILL HIM BEFORE HE HAS ACTUALLY COMMITTED ANY REAL CRIME, OUR LORD SHALL LOSE THE PEOPLE'S WILL.

WELL, I SUPPOSE IT IS MY DUTY AS A RETAINER TO FOLLOW MY LORD'S WISHES. SO HOW EXACTLY DOES SIR PLAN TO KILL LIU BEI?

I SEE...

HA, YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. WE CAN ACCUSE LIU BEI OF ANY CRIME ONCE HE'S DEAD.

ONLY THE WEST HAS BEEN LEFT EMPTY SINCE THE TAN TORRENT WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANYONE TO CROSS WITHOUT A BOAT.

MY BROTHERS ARE LYING IN WAIT ALONG EACH ROAD LEADING OUT FROM HERE. CAI HE WITH 5000 SOLDIERS ARE OUTSIDE THE EASTERN GATE NEAR XIAN HILLS. OUTSIDE THE SOUTHERN GATE LIES CAI ZHONG WITH 3000 MEN. LASTLY, CAI XUN AND HIS TROOPS ARE POSTED OUTSIDED THE NORTHERN GATE.

THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT MAN STANDING BEHIND LIU BEI: ZHAO YUN.

I SEE. NOT EVEN A MOUSE COULD ESCAPE FROM SUCH AN ENTRAPMENT.

INDEED. THAT ZHAO YUN LOOKS TO BE QUITE THE FORMIDABLE WARRIOR.

IF ZHAO YUN AND HIS TROOPS INTERFERE AND LIU BEI WERE TO ESCAPE, THERE WILL BE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES.

YES, GOOD PLAN.

AH, I GOT IT. I SHALL ASK GENERALS WEN PING AND WANG WEI TO LURE ZHAO YUN AWAY TO A SEPARATE BANQUET JUST FOR THE MILITARY OFFICERS.

WEN PING.

WANG WEI, THIS WAY.

THE TRUTH IS THAT OUR LORD HAS ASKED US TO...

THANK YOU.

UNDERSTOOD. WE SHALL LEND OUR ASSISTANCE.

I MUST DECLINE YOUR OFFER AS I AM STILL ON-DUTY.

AH, HELLO THERE, GENERAL ZHAO YUN. WHAT SAY WE HEAD ON DOWN TO THE OTHER PAVILLION FOR JUST US SOLDIERS AND ENJOY SOME DRINKS?

NO NEED TO BE SO FORMAL. IT'S A FESTIVAL SO RELAX!

OH, COME ON. DON'T BE LIKE THAT.

WHEN ELSE COULD WE SEE SUCH FINE TALENT?

BUT WE HEARD YOUR SPEAR DANCE IS QUITE SOME-THING TO BEHOLD.

I'M SORRY BUT NO.

YES?

ZHAO YUN.

HAVEN'T I ALREADY SAID NO!?

IF MY LORD SAYS SO THEN...

REFUSING TOO ADAMANTLY CAN BE A LITTLE DISCOURTEOUS AT TIMES. I'M SURE IT WOULD BE ALRIGHT TO GO WITH THEM FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

YES, YES. TODAY'S A FESTIVE DAY, AFTER ALL.

COME THIS WAY.

SIR'S LIFE IS IN DANGER ONCE AGAIN. THERE ARE SOLDIERS POSTED OUTSIDE ALL GATES EXCEPT FOR THE WESTERN GATE. PLEASE HURRY UP AND FLEE THROUGH THERE.

WHY OF COURSE, YI JI.

WOULD SIR ALLOW ME THE HONOUR OF POURING YOU A DRINK?

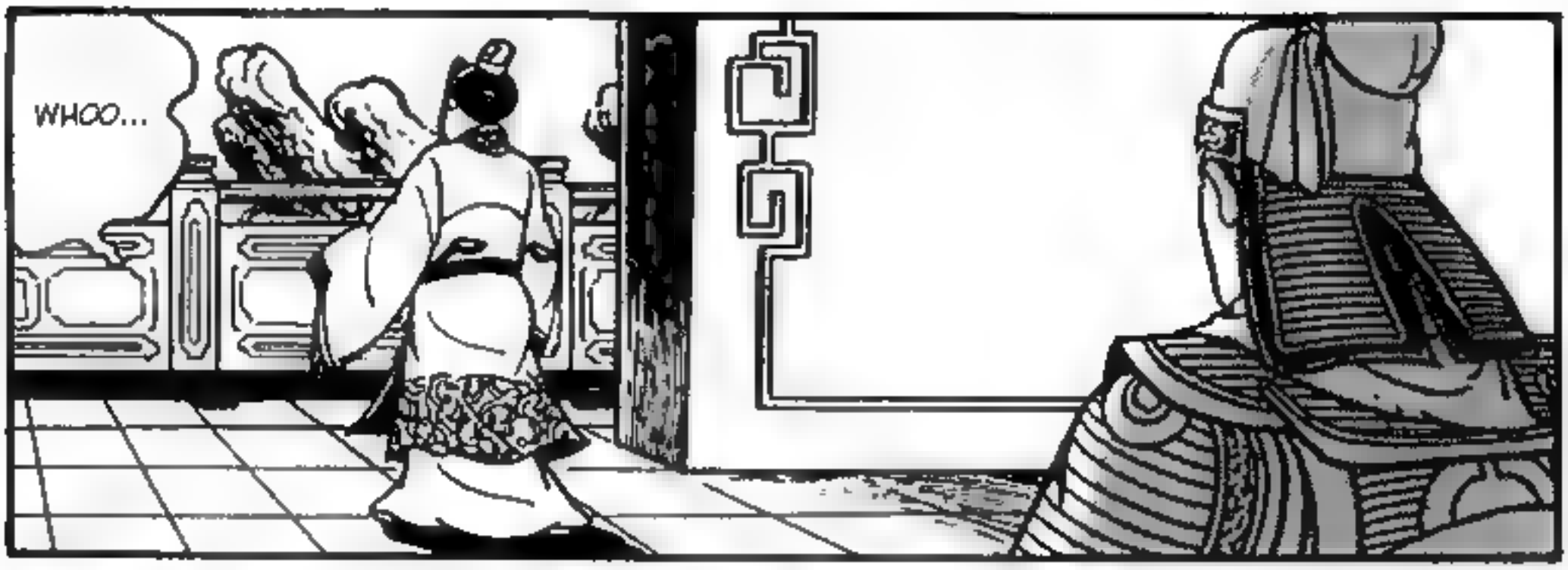
THANK YOU.
HERE'S YOUR WINE, SIR.

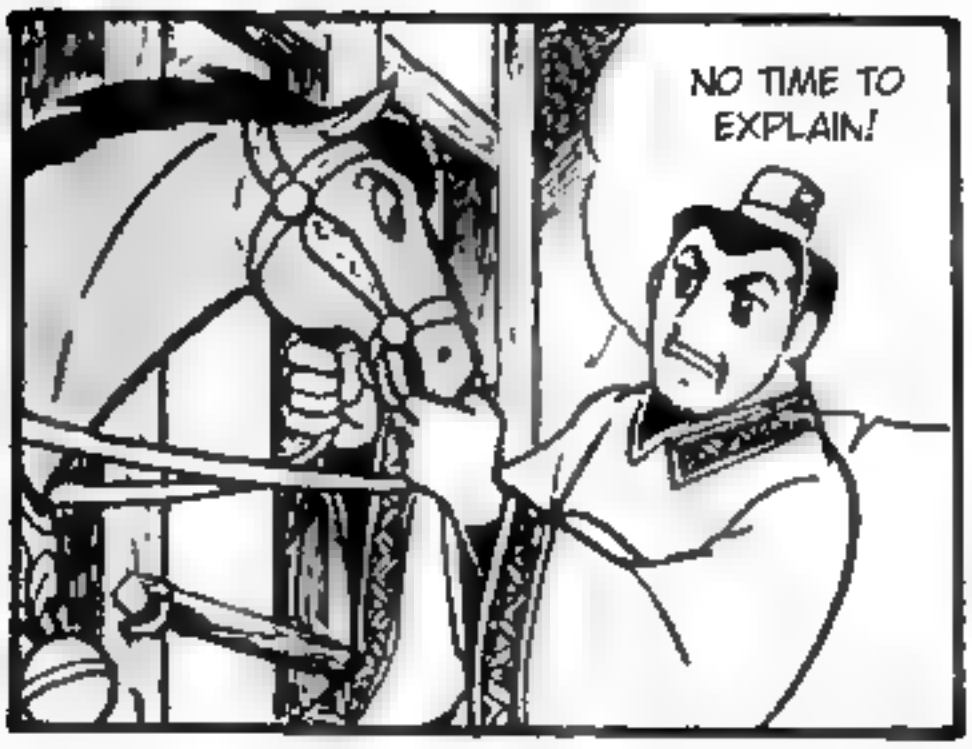
EXCUSE ME FOR A SECOND.

AHHH, WHAT AN EXQUISITE WINE!

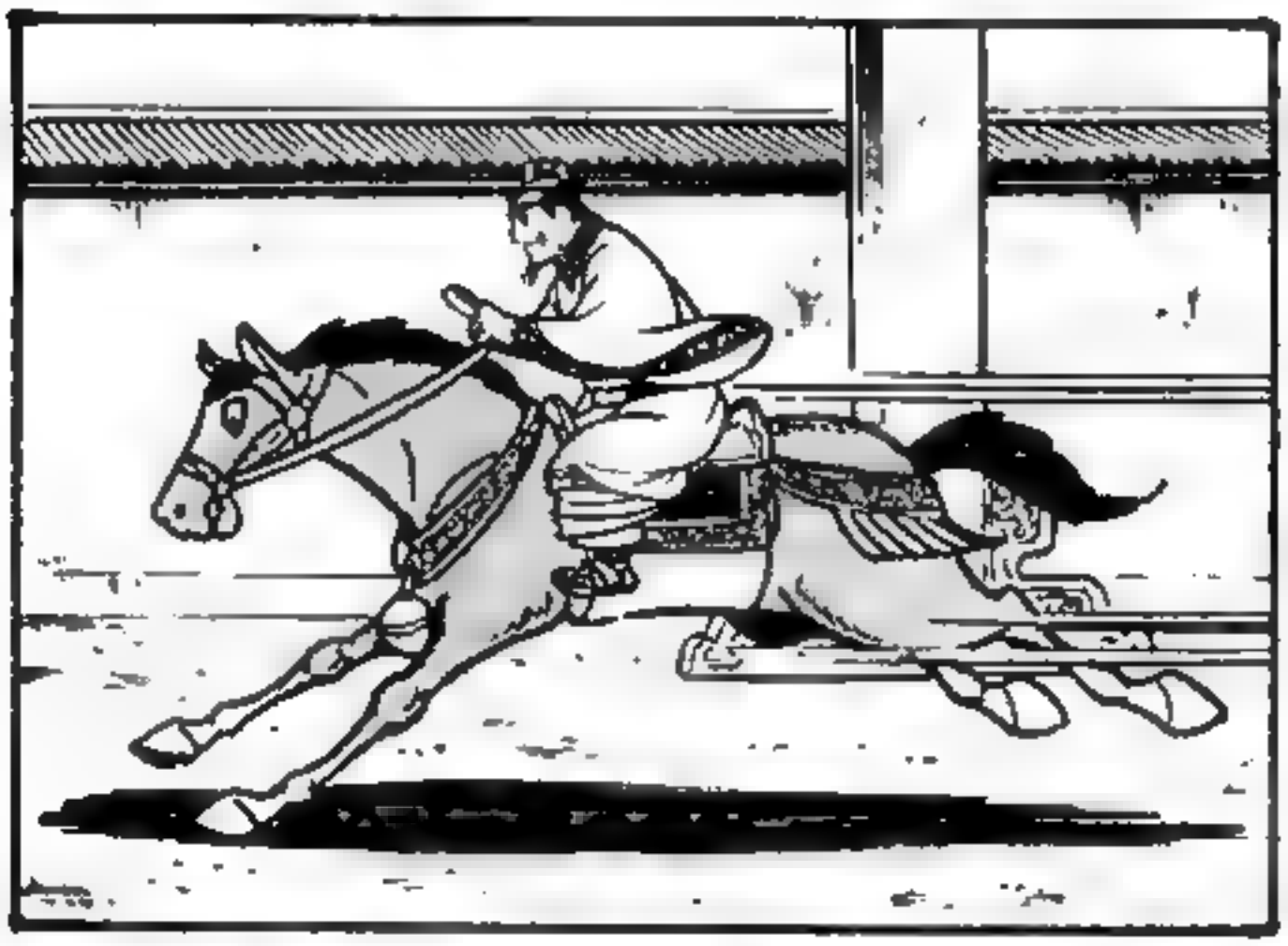
OH, I JUST NEED TO RELIEVE MYSELF. EXCUSE ME.

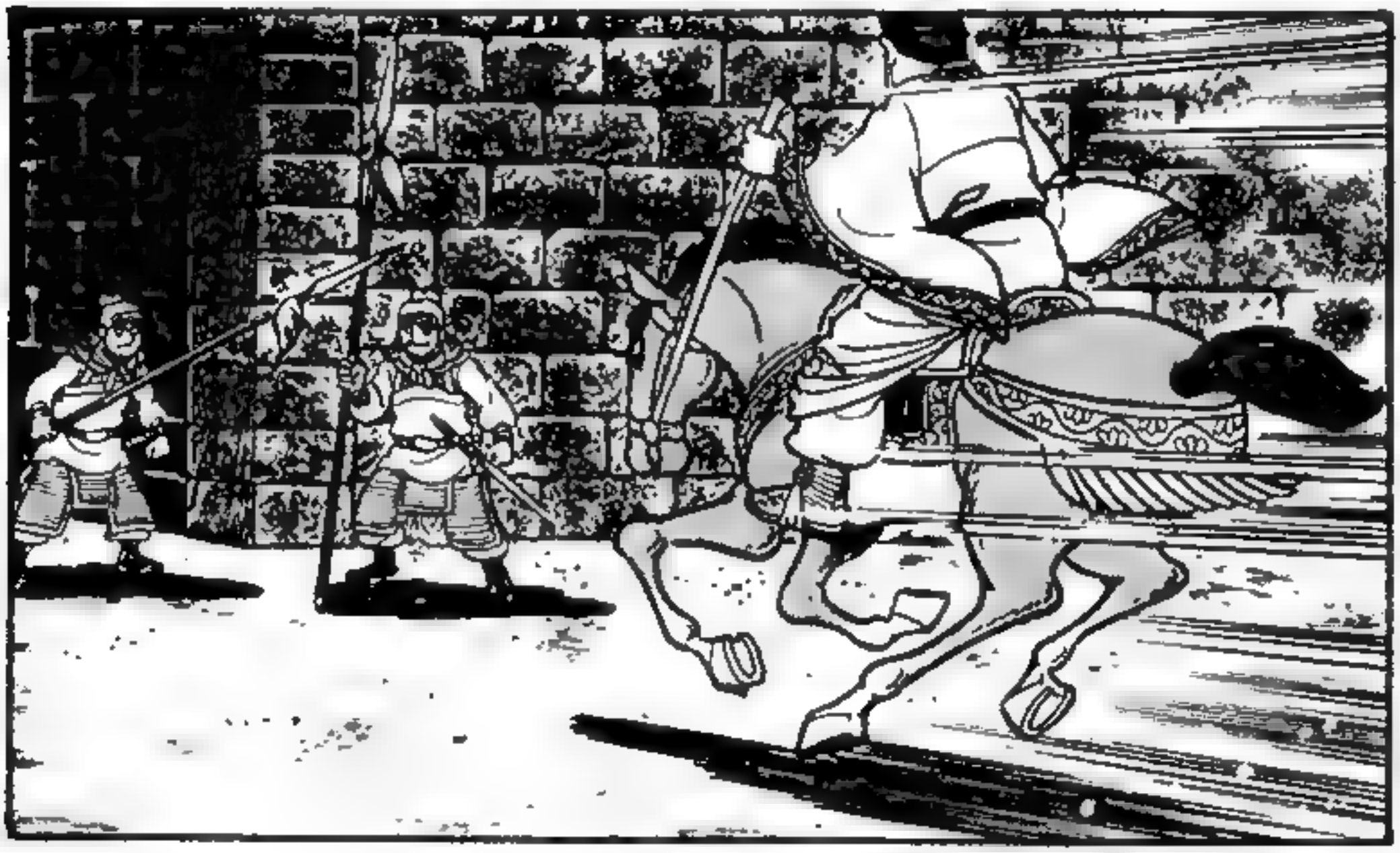
AH, GENERAL CAI MAO.
AND WHERE IS SIR HEADED TO?


WHOO...


NO TIME TO EXPLAIN!

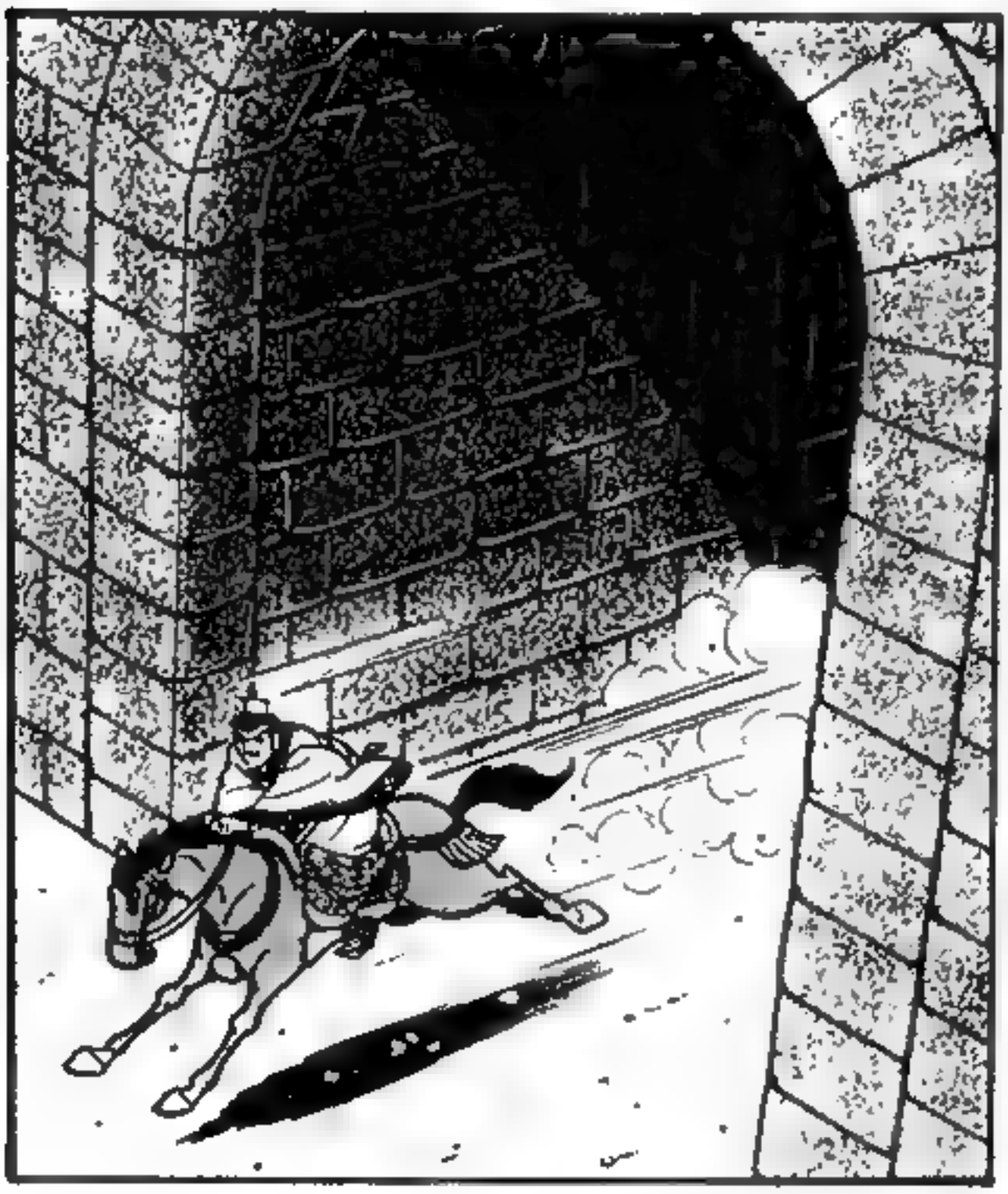
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE RUSH, SIR?
BRING OUT MY HORSE AT ONCE!





MOVE ASIDE!

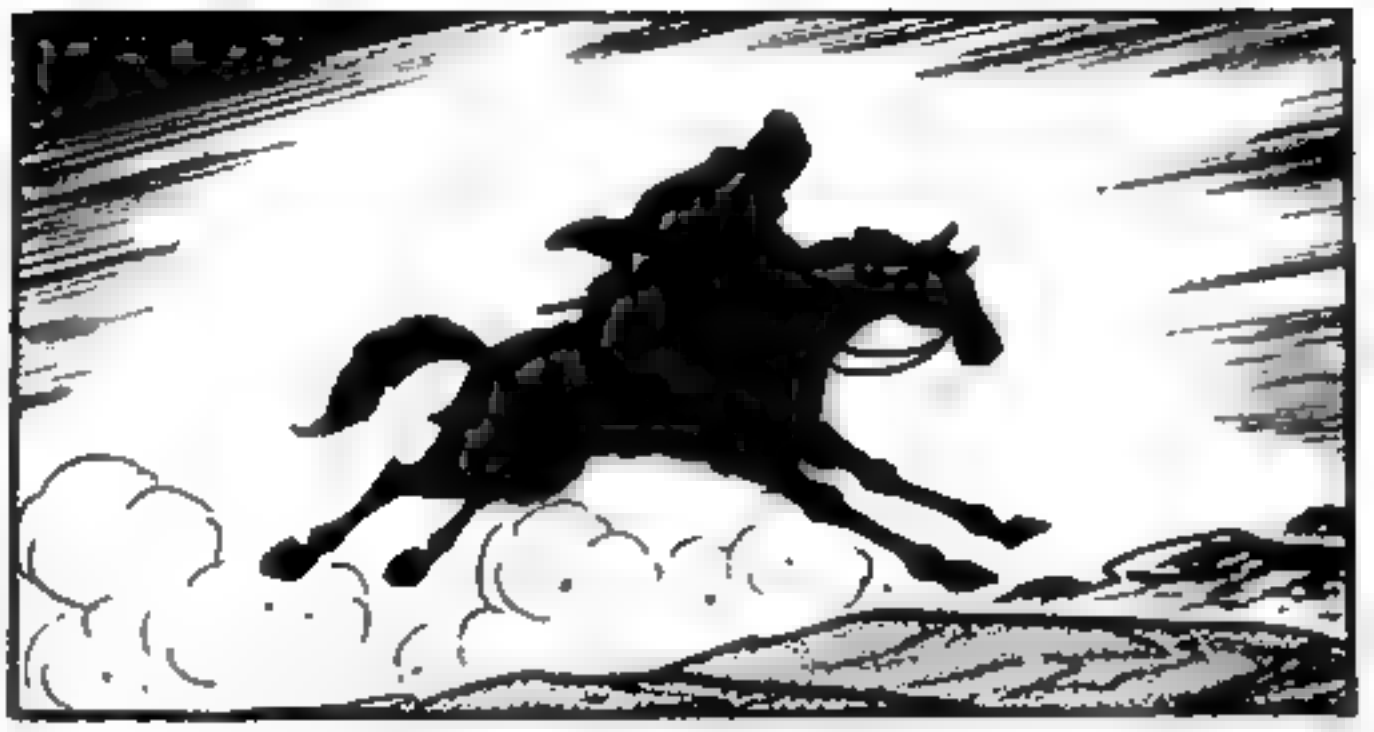
HALT!



AGHH!

YES, SIR!
QUICKLY! ALERT GENERAL CAI MAO RIGHT AWAY!

AHH!



I SEE. NO WONDER HE DIDN'T POST ANY GUARDS OUTSIDE THE WESTERN GATE...

HMM!?

IF EVEN A SLIVER OF SYMPATHY LIES IN YOUR HEART, THEN CROSS THIS RIVER!

DAMN, THEY'RE HERE ALREADY...

O' DILU HORSE, BLESSING OR CURSE, WHAT MAY YOU BE?

ENTRUSTING HIS LIFE TO THE HEXED HORSE, LIU BEI LEAPED INTO THE TAN TORRENT.

LIU BEI! FOR WHAT REASON DO YOU FLEE SUDDENLY!?

AHH!

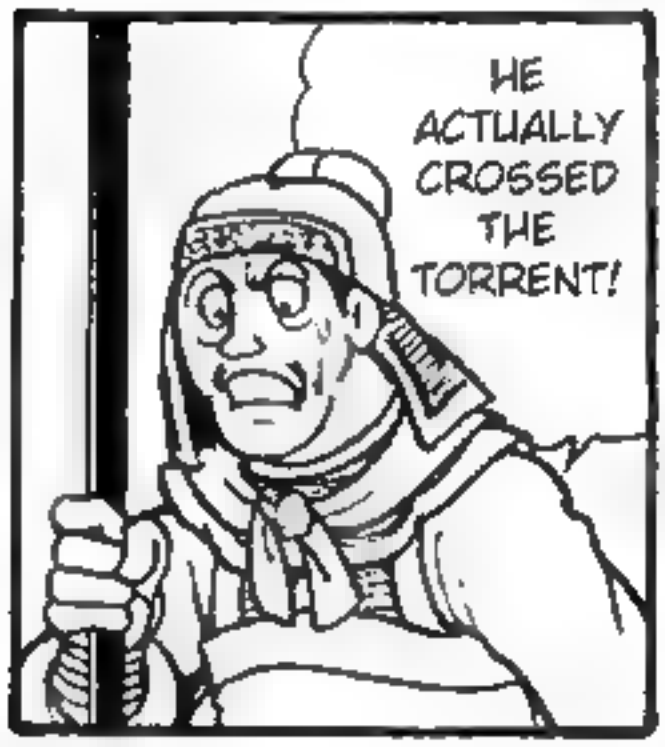
WHO ME? NEVER! IT'S ALL A MISUNDER-STANDING!

FOR WHAT REASON DO YOU WISH TO KILL A MAN WHO HAS DONE YOU NO HARM!?

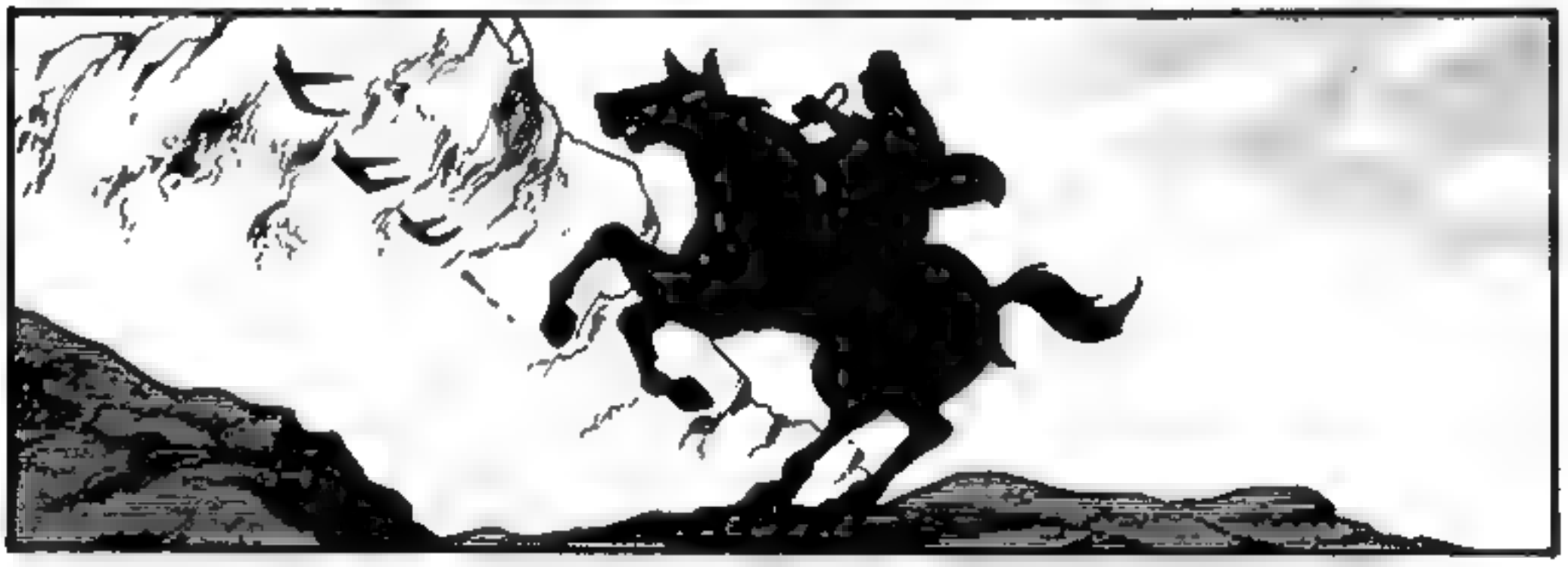
ゴ"
ゴ"

AHH!

ゴ"
ゴ"


HE ACTUALLY CROSSED THE TORRENT!

UNBELIEVABLE! ARE THE HEAVENS ON HIS SIDE AS WELL?



BY LEAPING INTO THE RAGING TORRENT, LIU BEI HAD ONCE AGAIN MANAGED TO NARROWLY AVOID DEATH

SHUI JING

WHAT WOULD BECOME OF MY AMBITION IF I DIED IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...?

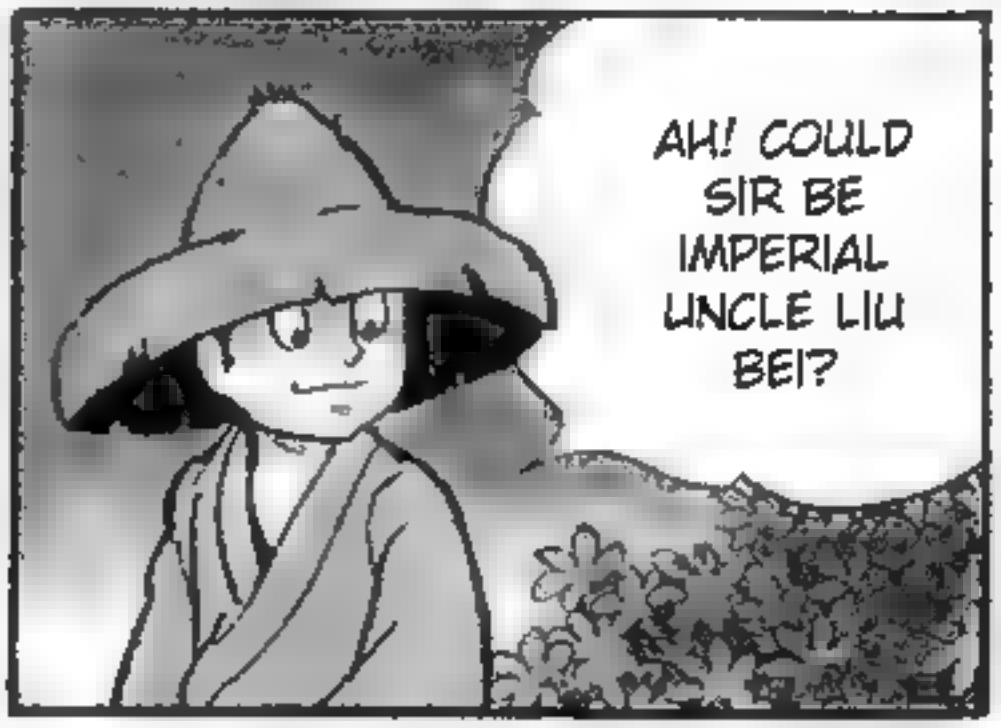
WHAT AM I DOING...

JUST WHAT HAVE I BEEN DOING WITH MY LIFE FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS!?

AH, GOOD. THERE'RE PEOPLE LIVING AROUND THESE PARTS.

HM?

HELLO THERE, CHILD. I WOULD LIKE TO ASK FOR DIRECTIONS IF YOU DON'T MIND...


AH! COULD SIR BE IMPERIAL UNCLE LIU BEI?

SO I WAS RIGHT.

HOW... DOES A BOY LIKE YOU KNOW OF ME?

YOUR MASTER?

MY MASTER TALKS OF YOU QUITE FREQUENTLY AND YOU APPEARED TO MATCH THE DESCRIPTIONS I'VE HEARD.

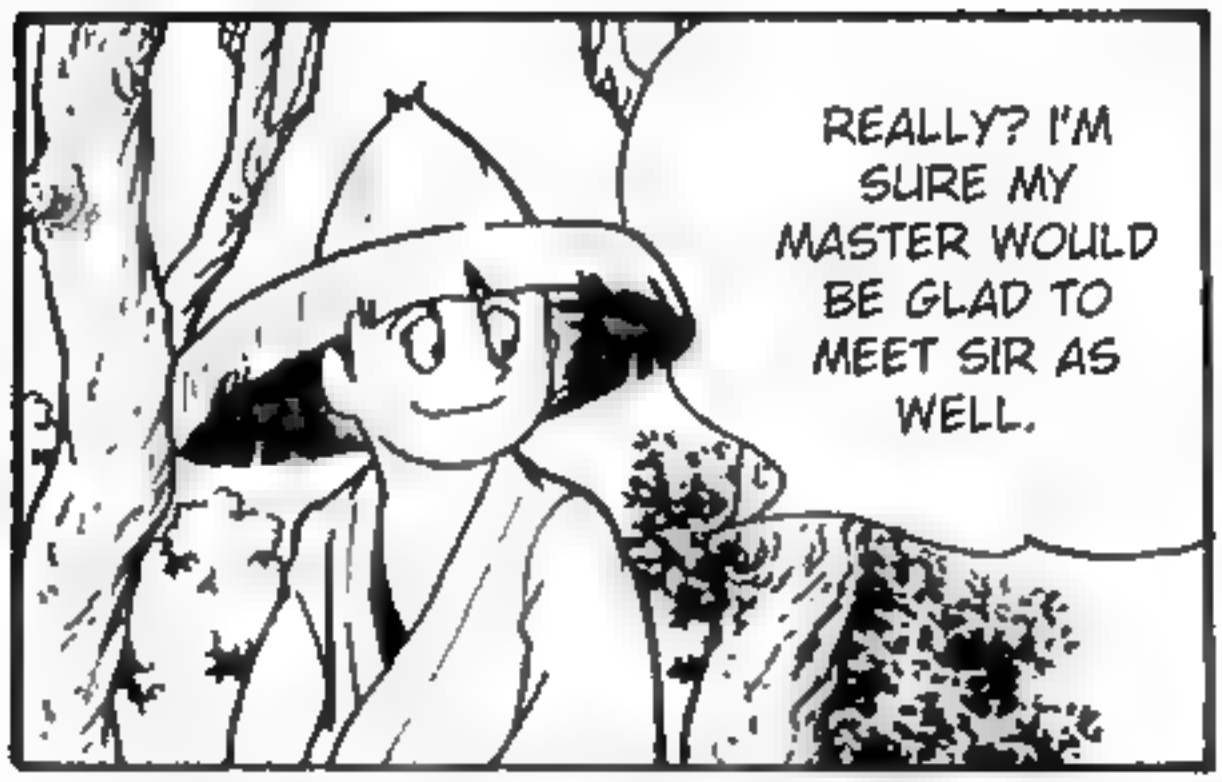
IS THAT SO? AND WHAT KIND OF A MAN IS HE?

HIS NAME IS SIMA HUI BUT HE IS MORE COMMONLY KNOWN BY HIS TAOIST NAME, SHUI JING.*

I SEE. I NEVER KNEW SUCH A RESPECTED SCHOLAR LIVED OUT HERE.

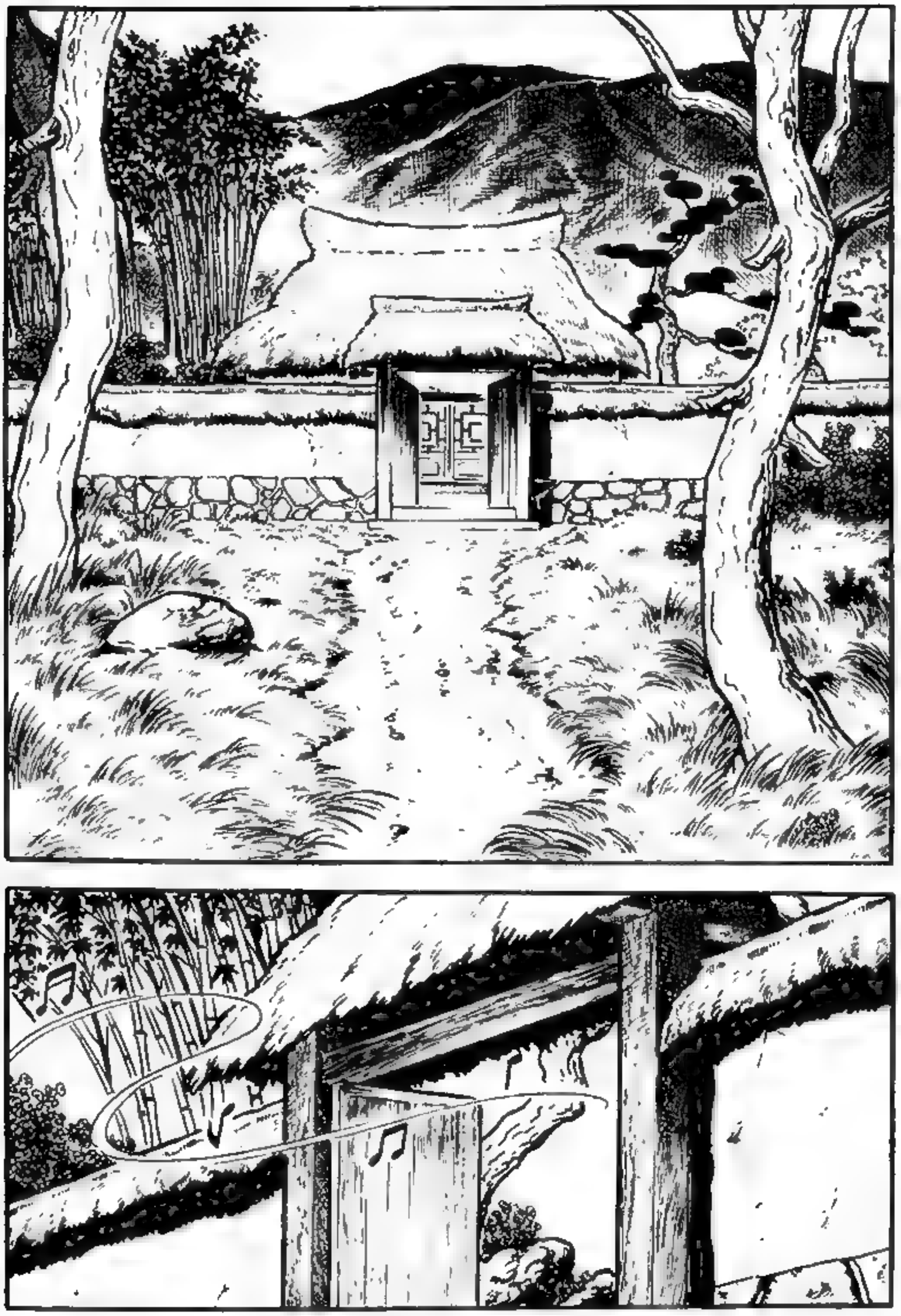
HERE IN XIANGYANG, HE'S QUITE A FAMOUS SCHOLAR THAT MANY OTHER RENOWNED PEOPLE COME VISIT.

*SHUI JING LITERALLY MEANS "WATER MIRROR"


REALLY? I'M SURE MY MASTER WOULD BE GLAD TO MEET SIR AS WELL.

I THINK I'D LIKE TO MEET HIM.

THEN FOLLOW ME, I'LL LEAD THE WAY.



I SEE.

THIS IS THE HOME OF MASTER SHUI JING.

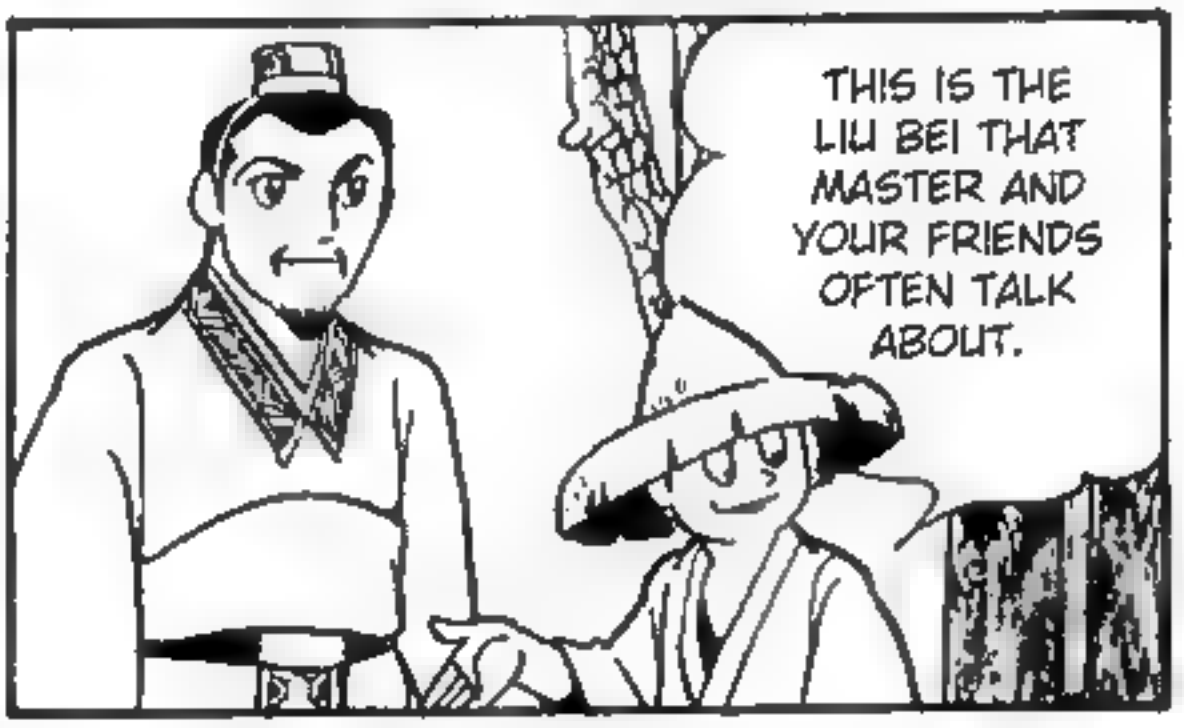
NO, NO. IT WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU TO SEE IF YOUR MASTER IS FREE. I WOULDN'T WANT TO IMPOSE.

NO NEED TO BE FORMAL, PLEASE COME RIGHT INSIDE.

WHO IS IT!?

MASTER.

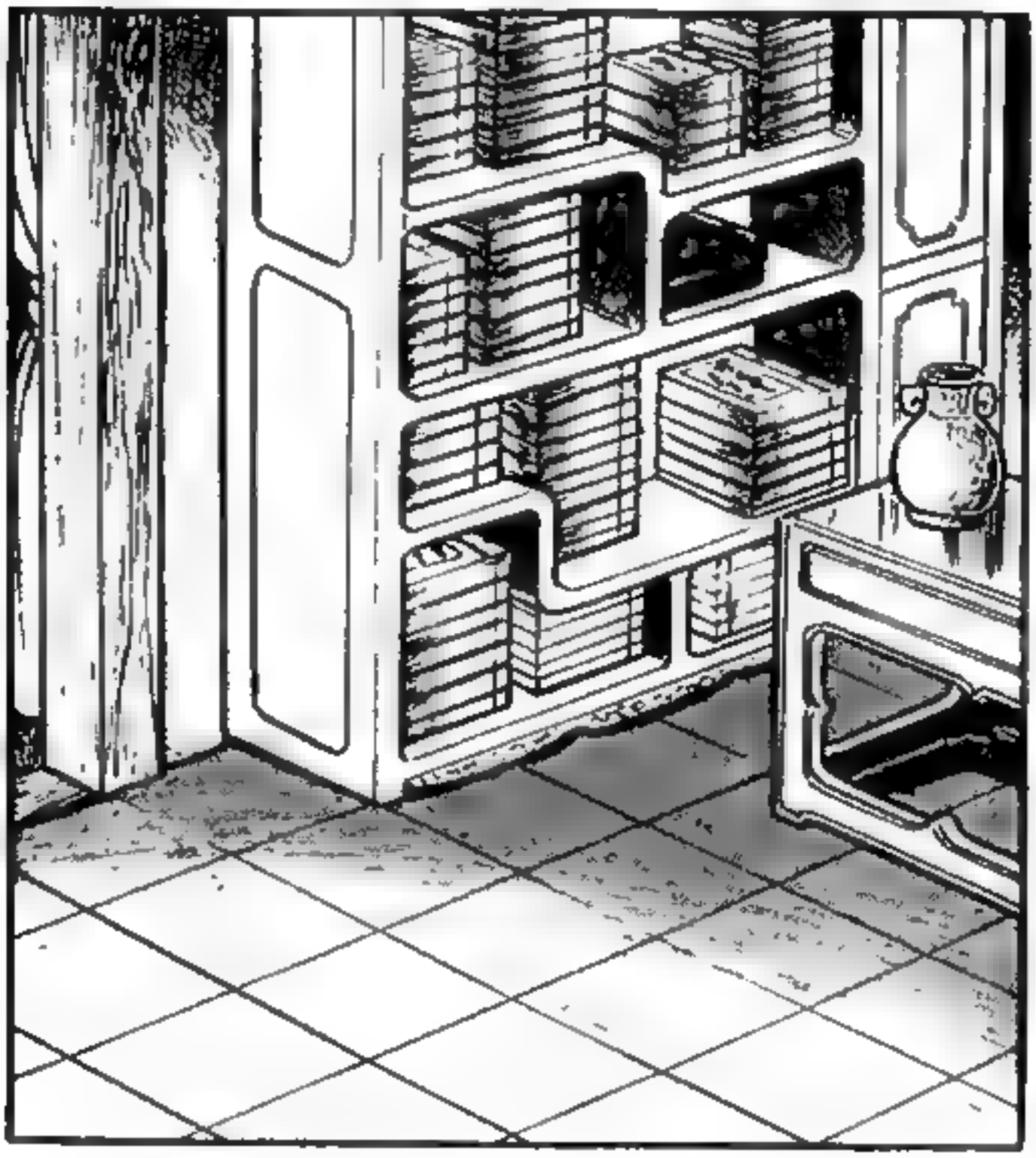
A MAN OF NOBLE LINEAGE MUST HAVE COME TO VISIT ME.
THE LUTE I WAS JUST PLAYING SUDDENLY MADE QUITE A HIGH AND PURE SOUND.

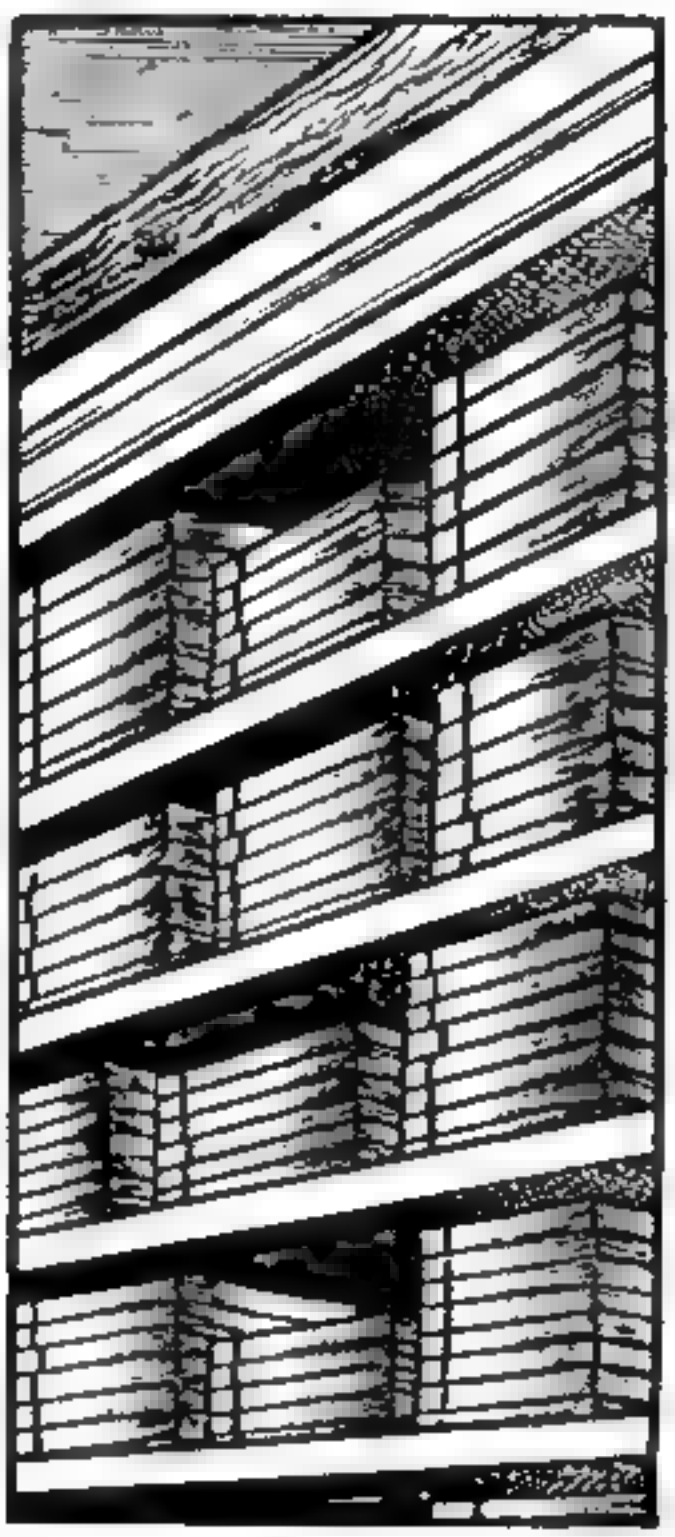

THIS IS THE LIU BEI THAT MASTER AND YOUR FRIENDS OFTEN TALK ABOUT.

NO, NOT AT ALL. YOU CAME AT A GOOD TIME.
FORGIVE ME FOR THE SUDDEN INTRUSION.

PLEASE, COME INSIDE.

AH!





PLEASE, SIT DOWN.

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I HAD TO JUMP INTO THE TAN TORRENT WHILE ON MY HORSE.

BY THE WAY, MIGHT I INQUIRE WHY YOUR ROBES ARE WET?

SO THE RUMOURS ABOUT THE FESTIVAL HAVING ULTERIOR MOTIVES WERE TRUE...

YOU HAD TO JUMP INTO THE TAN TORRENT ON YOUR HORSE...!?

YES, A LITTLE.

YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT IT!?

IN ANY CASE, IT'S RATHER DISAPPOINTING TO SEE THE ESTEEMED LIU BEI NOT ONLY WASTE HIS TIME BUT ALSO RISK HIS HEALTH BY BEING CAUGHT UP WITH THE TRIFLING SQUABBLES OF ANOTHER MAN.

IF YOU ASK ME, BAD LUCK IS NOT TO BE BLAMED.

YES, IT IS QUITE SHAMEFUL BUT WHAT CAN ONE DO AGAINST NATURAL MISFORTUNE?

TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, YOU CANNOT CAPITALIZE ON ANY CHANCES BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO GOOD TALENTS BY YOUR SIDE.

I'M AFRAID YOU DOTE UPON YOUR SUBJECTS TOO MUCH.

THAT'S SAYING A LITTLE TOO MUCH, NO? AFTER ALL, I HAVE SPLENDID WARRIORS SUCH AS GUAN YU, ZHANG FEI, AND ZHAO YUN BY MY SIDE.

SUCH LOVE MAY BE NICE BUT IS NOT FITTING FOR A GREAT RULER.

AS SUCH, HE MUST NOT VALUE INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS BUT NOTE WEAKNESSES PRESENT IN THE WHOLE.

A GREAT RULER MUST BE ABLE TO SEE ALL OF HIS SUBJECTS AS A SINGLE COHESIVE UNIT.

IT IS TRUE THAT GUAN YU, ZHANG FEI, AND ZHAO YUN ARE ALL EXCELLENT WARRIORS BUT THAT IS ALL. THEY ARE NOT INDIVIDUALS CAPABLE OF SEEING THE GREATER PICTURE AND LEADING THE WAY IN THESE CHAOTIC TIMES.

YES, YOU CERTAINLY DO HAVE A POINT...

WHAT YOU LACK IS AN ADVISOR CAPABLE OF THAT.

NOT AT ALL. ON THE CONTRARY, TALENT IS ALL AROUND US BUT WHAT IS LACKING IS THOSE WHO CAN WIELD IT.

FINDING SUCH TALENT WOULD NATURALLY BE IDEAL BUT I'M AFRAID THEY AREN'T ANYWHERE TO BE FIND.

THERE IS A POPULAR CHILDREN'S SONG AROUND THESE PARTS. I WONDER IF YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH IT?

PARDON MY IGNORANCE BUT COULD YOU THEN TELL ME WHO THESE TALENTS ARE?

IN EIGHT OR NINE YEARS BEGINS THE DECLINE, WITH NOTHING LEFT IN FOUR MORE YEARS.

AS DESTINY FINALLY SETS FORTH, MAY THE DRAGON LEAVE ITS MIRE AND ASCEND TO THE HEAVENS.

THE BEGINNING OF THE DECLINE REFERS TO LIU BIAO'S FIRST WIFE PASSING AWAY, WHICH MARKS THE START OF HIS FAMILY TROUBLES.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS SONG?

I REALLY DON'T KNOW.

AND THE "NOTHING LEFT" LINE REFERS TO LACK OF ANY TALENTED OFFICERS AFTER LIU BIAO'S DEATH IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

THE DESTINY OF THE DRAGON REFERS TO NONE OTHER THAN YOU, LIU BEI.

LASTLY,

SPECIFICALLY, IT MEANS THAT YOU ARE THE DESTINED MAN.

W-WHAT ...?

I... I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...

HAVEN'T YOU EVER FELT THAT YOU WERE PROTECTED BY THE HEAVENS?

BUT EXACTLY WHO?

WELL IN ANY CASE, THERE ARE A WEALTH OF TALENTS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THESE LANDS. IF YOU CAN USE THEM WELL, YOU CAN FULFILL YOUR AMBITIONS.

EVEN OBTAINING ONE OF THEM WOULD BE ENOUGH TO RESTORE ORDER TO THE EMPIRE.

PERHAPS FULONG OR FENGCHU...*

NO NEED TO RUSH.

JUST WHO EXACTLY IS THIS FULONG OR FENGCHU!?

I THANK YOU KINDLY.

I'M SURE YOU MUST BE TIRED AFTER YOUR HARROWING ESCAPE SO PLEASE ENJOY THE MEAL AND STAY THE NIGHT.

MASTER, THE MEAL HAS BEEN PREPARED.

AH, GOOD.

*LITERALLY, FULONG MEANS "HIDDEN DRAGON" AND FENGCHU MEANS "YOUNG PHOENIX."

I'VE MET A WISE PERSON.

GUAN YU, ZHANG FEI, AND ZHAO YUN ARE CERTAINLY VERY STRONG WARRIORS.
WHAT HE SAYS IS RIGHT.

IF I AM TO ACCOMPLISH MY GOALS, I NEED A MAN WITH EXCEPTIONAL FORESIGHT.

BUT THEY CANNOT SEE THE FUTURE.

FULONG AND FENGCHU... I WONDER WHAT KIND OF MEN THEY ARE?

ACCORDING TO SHUI JING, THERE ARE STILL TWO SUCH MEN THAT DO NOT SERVE ANY LORD AS OF YET.

HOOFSTEPS AT THIS LATE AT NIGHT? COULD IT BE PURSUERS?

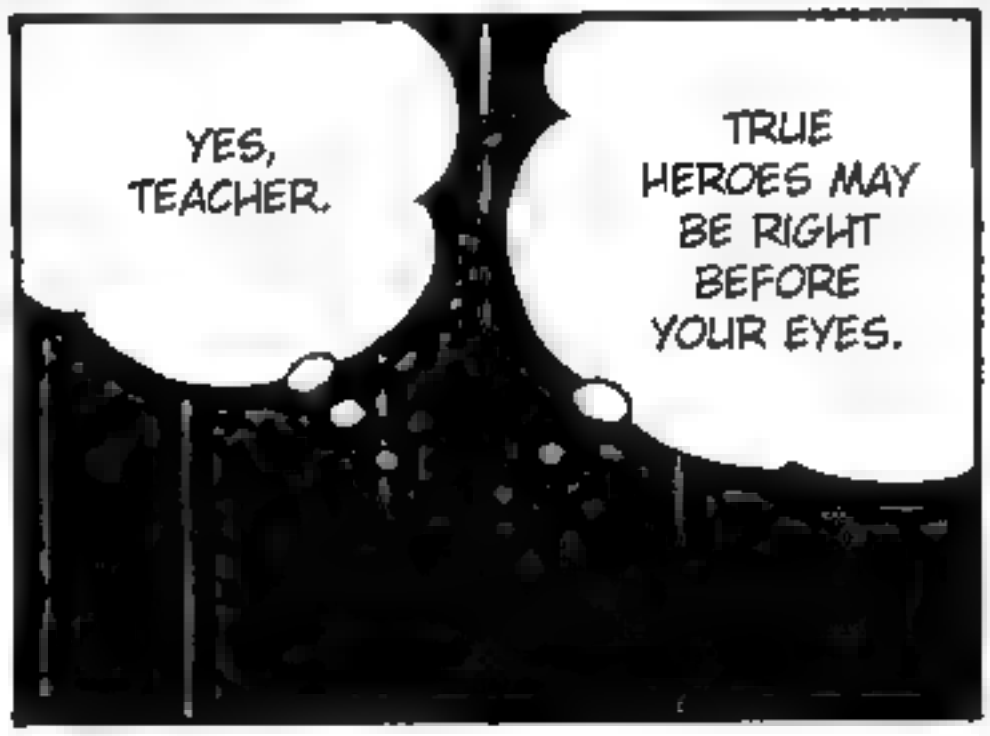
HM?

AH, GOOD EVENING. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE AT THIS HOUR?

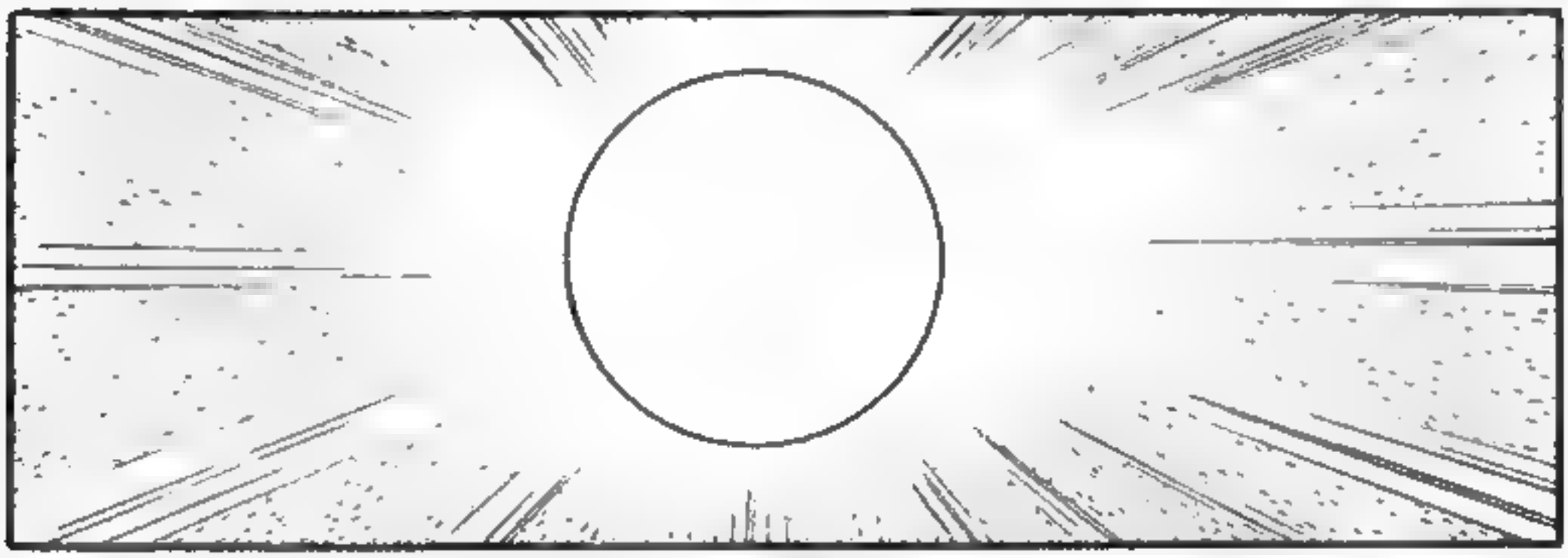
FOR A MAN AS SMART AS YOURSELF, YOU DID QUITE A FOOLISH THING. THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO WASTE YOUR TALENT ON THE LIKES OF LIU BIAO.

BUT AFTER MEETING HIM FIRSTHAND, I NOW SEE THAT HE'S MEDIOCRE AT BEST. AND SO I LEFT MUCH EARLIER THAN I HAD INTENDED.
SORRY FOR COMING SO LATE, TEACHER. YOU SEE, I WENT TO JINGZHOU TO MEET WITH LIU BIAO AFTER HEARING THAT HE'S A MODEL LORD WHO REWARDS GOOD AND PUNISHES EVIL.

I WONDER WHO THAT IS... COULD IT BE FULONG OR FENGCHU...?


YES, TEACHER.
TRUE HEROES MAY BE RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES.

WELL, WHOEVER HE IS, I'LL ASK MASTER SHUI JING TO INTRODUCE HIM TO ME IN THE MORNING.



DID YOU HAVE A GUEST LAST NIGHT?

AH, SO YOU'RE UP ALREADY.
GOOD MORNING.

YES, HE'S A GOOD PUPIL OF MINE.

I SEE... I WOULD'VE LIKED VERY MUCH TO MEET HIM...

I'D LIKE TO BUT I'M AFRAID HE ALREADY LEFT IN SEARCH FOR A LORD TO SERVE.

COULD YOU POSSIBLY INTRODUCE ME TO HIM?

ME?

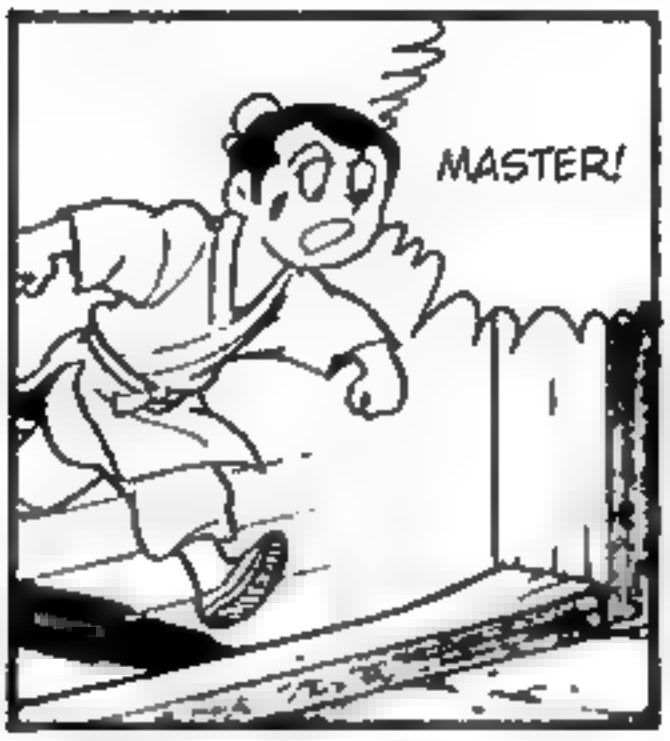
IF IT'S AT ALL POSSIBLE, MIGHT YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING ME ASSISTANCE?

BUT DO NOT WORRY. A MAN 10 TIMES BETTER THAN MYSELF WILL SURELY COME TO HELP YOU IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

HAHA, I'M AFRAID THE YEARS HAVE TOOK TOO MUCH OF A TOLL ON THIS BODY FOR IT TO BE ANY USE.

HM?

NO NEED TO RUSH, SIR.
JUST WHO EXACTLY MIGHT THAT BE?


MASTER!

?

SOLDIERS ARE SUR-ROUNDING OUR HOME!

WHAT!?

AH! IT'S MY ZHAO YUN.

MY LORD! IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU ALIVE AND WELL.

A FARMER LIVING NEARBY TOLD ME THAT A NOBLE-LOOKING MAN HEADED TOWARDS THIS HOUSE WITH A CHILD YESTERDAY.

HOW DID YOU KNOW I WAS HERE?

I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU, MY LORD.

IF FARMERS KNOW YOU'RE HERE, THEN PURSUERS MAY BE CLOSE AS WELL.

YES.

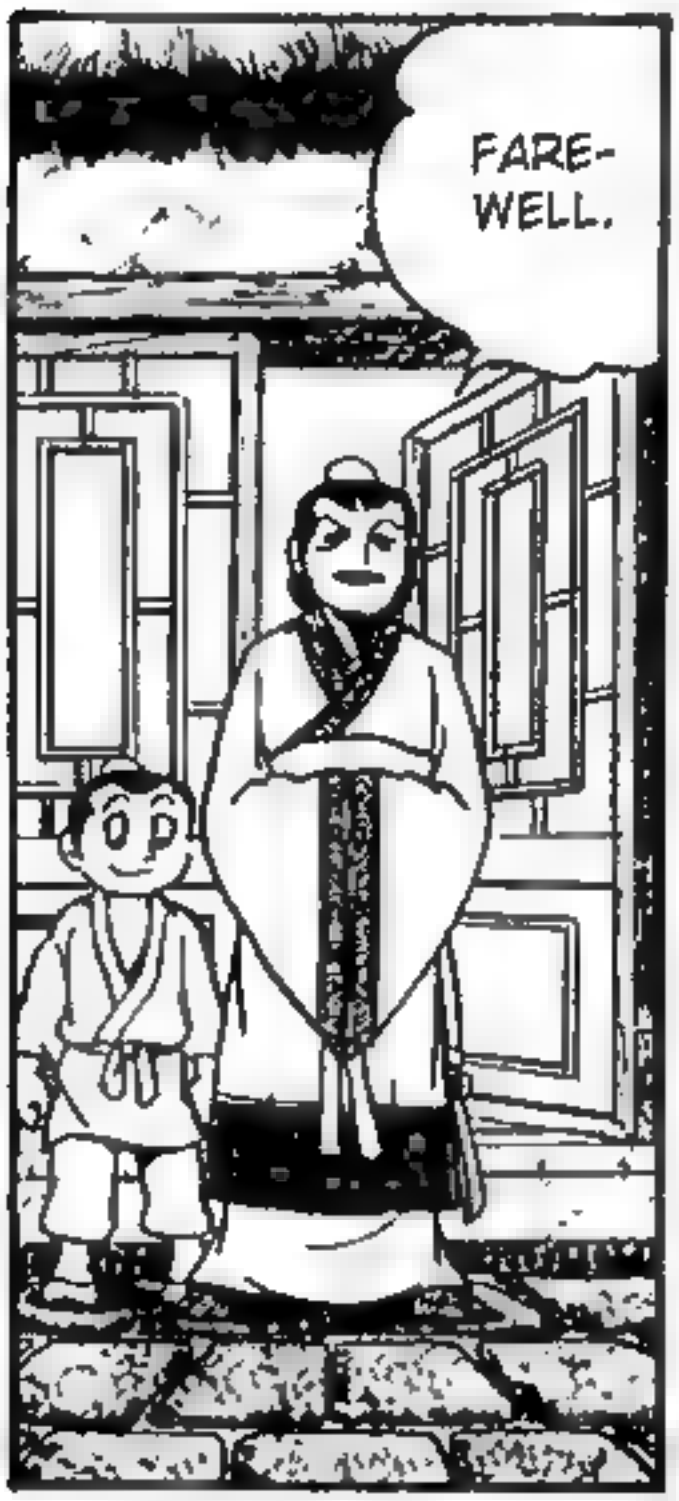
MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.

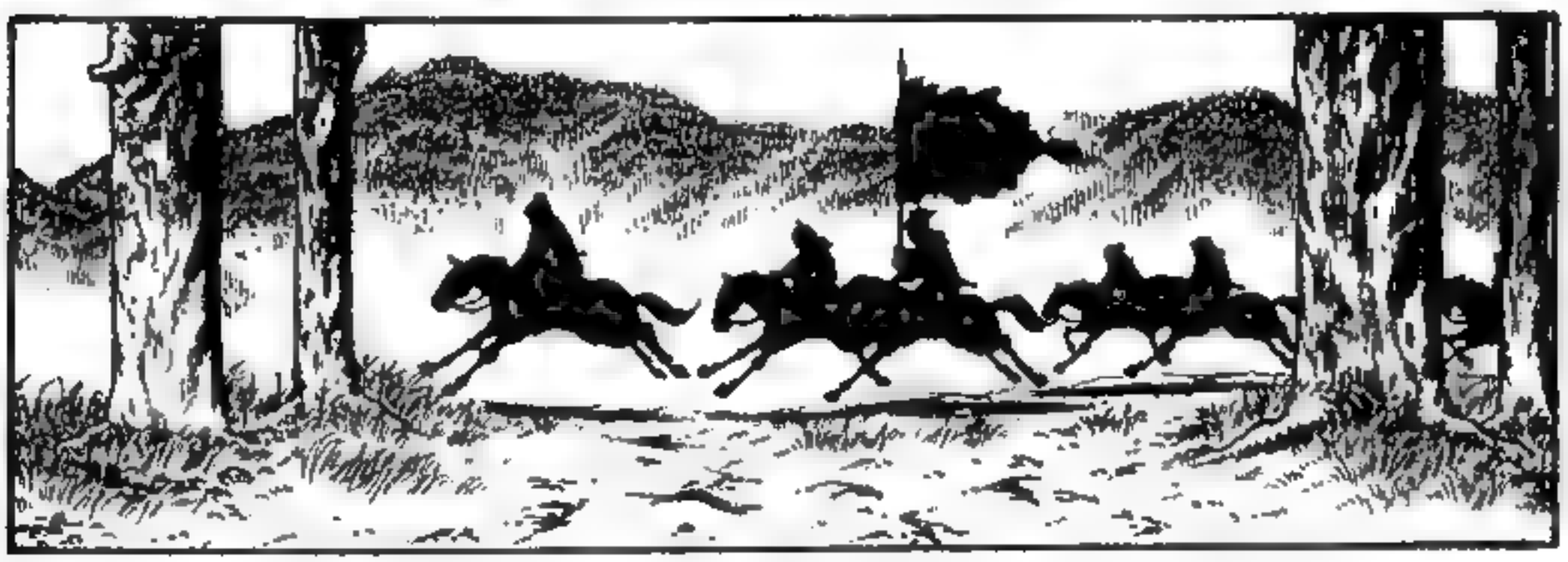
IT'D BE BEST TO HURRY BACK TO XINYE CASTLE.

YES, DO DWELL UPON WHAT I SAID.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR ADVICE, MASTER SHUI JING. I SHALL KEEP YOUR WORDS CLOSE AT MIND.

GOOD BYE THEN.


FARE-WELL.



THEY TRIED TO KILL YOU AGAIN!?

?

ZHAO ZILONG!

UNFOR-GIVABLE...

OUR LORD HAD SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE AND MY PRIORITY WAS FINDING HIM FIRST.

WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU DOING!? WHY DIDN'T YOU BRING BACK CAI MAO'S HEAD!?

BROTHER, WE CAN'T JUST LET THIS GO! THEY TRIED TO KILL YOU NOT ONLY ONCE BUT TWICE!

THIS MEANS WAR!

I HAVE A FEELING THE ASSASSINATION PLOTS WERE CARRIED WITHOUT LIU BIAO'S KNOWLEDGE.

QUIET DOWN, ZHANG FEI. THERE'S NO NEED TO YELL.

THEN JUST WHO'S BEHIND THESE ATTEMPTS!?

YES, I AGREE. I CANNOT THINK LIU BIAO WOULD SUDDENLY TURN ON YOU NOW, AFTER HOW HE HAS TREATED YOU.

JINGZHOU IS CURRENTLY BOGGED DOWN BY SUCCESSION RIGHT PROBLEMS. IT'S MOST LIKELY THE CAI FAMILY'S DOING.

IF MY LORD DOES NOT TELL LIU BIAO RIGHT NOW, CAI MAO MIGHT TRY TO HIDE HIS CRIME BY SOME OTHER MACHINATION.

THEN ALL THE BETTER IT IS TO INFORM LIU BIAO, MY LORD.

ALRIGHT THEN. I SHALL WRITE A LETTER.

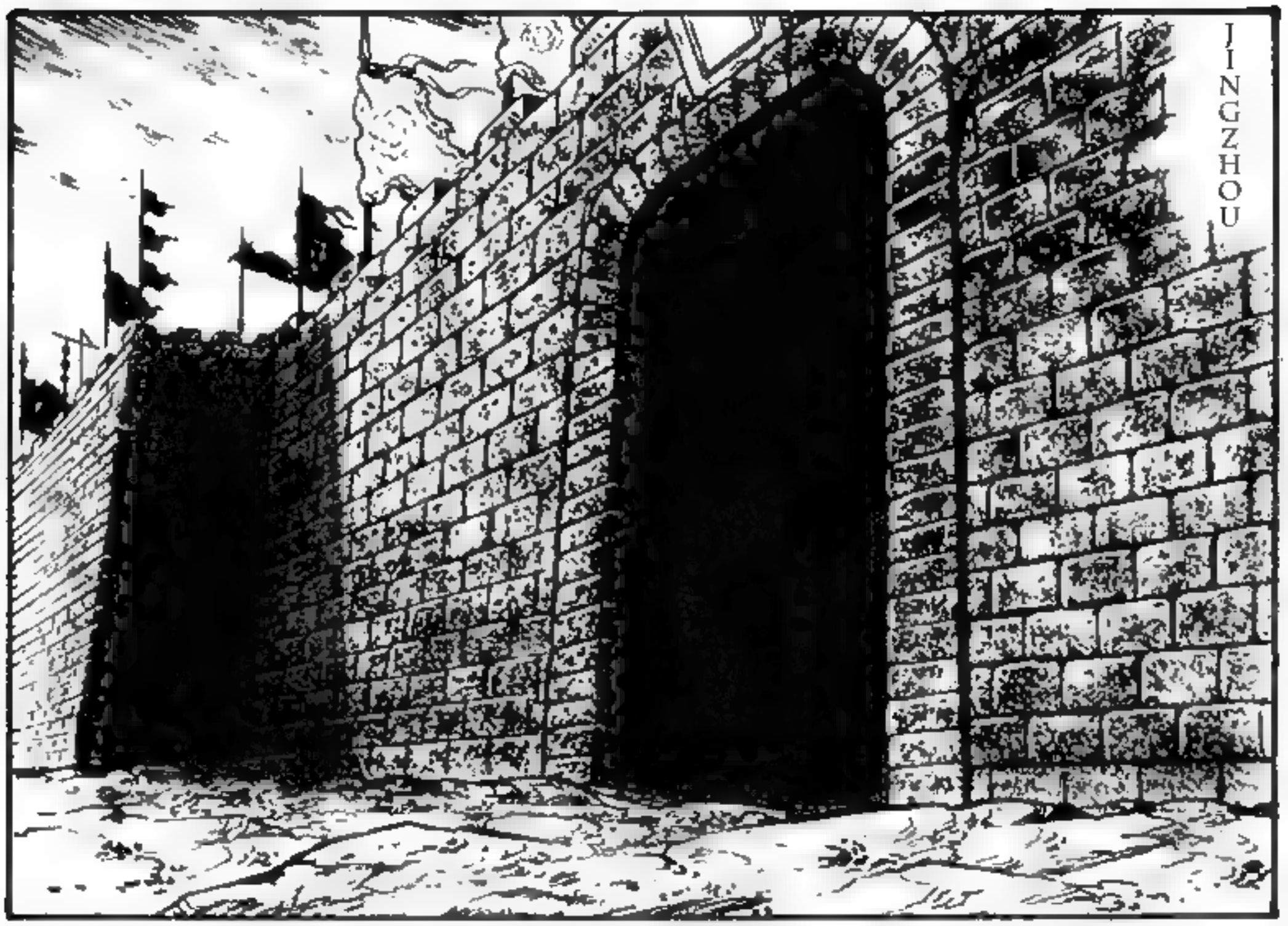
HMM,

SUN QIAN.

YES?

YES, MY LORD.

TAKE THIS LETTER TO LIU BIAO.


JINGZHOU

YES, SIR.
WHAT!? MY OWN GENERAL CAI MAO TRIED TO ASSASSINATE LIU BEI!? AND THAT WAS THE REASON WHY HE ARRANGED THE WHOLE FESTIVAL!?

CALL CAI MAO AT ONCE!

HOW DARE HE...!

OUR LORD IS CALLING FOR YOUR IMMEDIATE PRESENCE, GENERAL.

LET US FINISH OUR TALK LATER.

HMM, THAT'S QUITE SUDDEN.

CAI MAO!

YOU CALLED, MY LORD?

I HEARD YOU MADE AN ATTEMPT ON LIU BEI'S LIFE!

ALL THAT TALK ABOUT A FESTIVAL WAS ONLY SO YOU COULD LURE LIU BEI AND KILL HIM! YOU'VE NOT ONLY DECEIVED HIM BUT ME AS WELL! YOUR CRIMES ARE UNFORGIVABLE!

I HEREBY ORDER CAI MAO TO BE EXECUTED!

DEAR, WAIT!

PLEASE FORGIVE MY BROTHER'S ACTIONS. CRIME IT MAY BE, HE DID IT NOT FOR PERSONAL GLORY BUT FOR THE SAKE OF OUR STATE.

ABSOLUTELY NOT! MOBILIZING THE ARMY WITHOUT MY PERMISSION IS EQUIVALENT TO TREASON! I REFUSE TO PARDON HIM!

I BEG YOUR BENEVO-LENCE...

WAIT, SIR!

OFF WITH HIS HEAD!

I BEG OF SIR TO SETTLE THIS MATTER QUIETLY.

IF THE BROTHER OF SIR'S WIFE IS EXECUTED DUE TO MY LORD, I'M AFRAID MY LORD WILL FIND IT MORALLY TROUBLING TO REMAIN HERE FOR LONG.

MNN...

THANK YOU, SIR.

CAI MAO, I SHALL SPARE YOUR LIFE THIS TIME. BUT YOU ARE HEREBY DISMISSED.

LIU QI!

YES, FATHER?

BUT DOING ONLY THIS MUCH CANNOT EXPRESS HOW SORRY I AM TO LIU BEI.

YES, FATHER.

GO TO XINYE IN MY STEAD AND MAKE A FORMAL APOLOGY TO LIU BEI.

YES, OF COURSE. THERE WAS NO NEED FOR YOU TO COME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE, I'D HAVE ACCEPTED THE APOLOGY EITHER WAY.

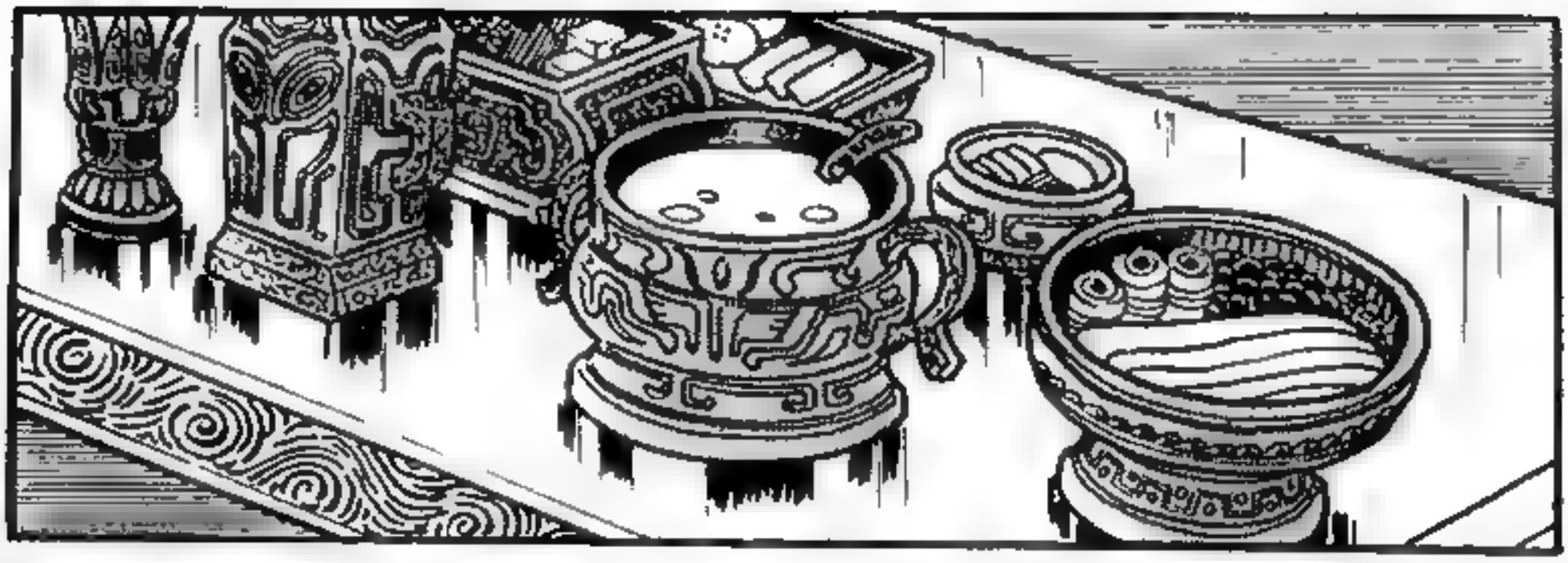
I'VE COME TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE WHOLE AFFAIR IN MY FATHER'S STEAD. I HOPE SIR CAN ACCEPT THIS APOLOGY.

THANK YOU, SIR.

TELL YOUR FATHER THAT I CONSIDER THE WHOLE AFFAIR AS WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE.

RIGHT AWAY, SIR.

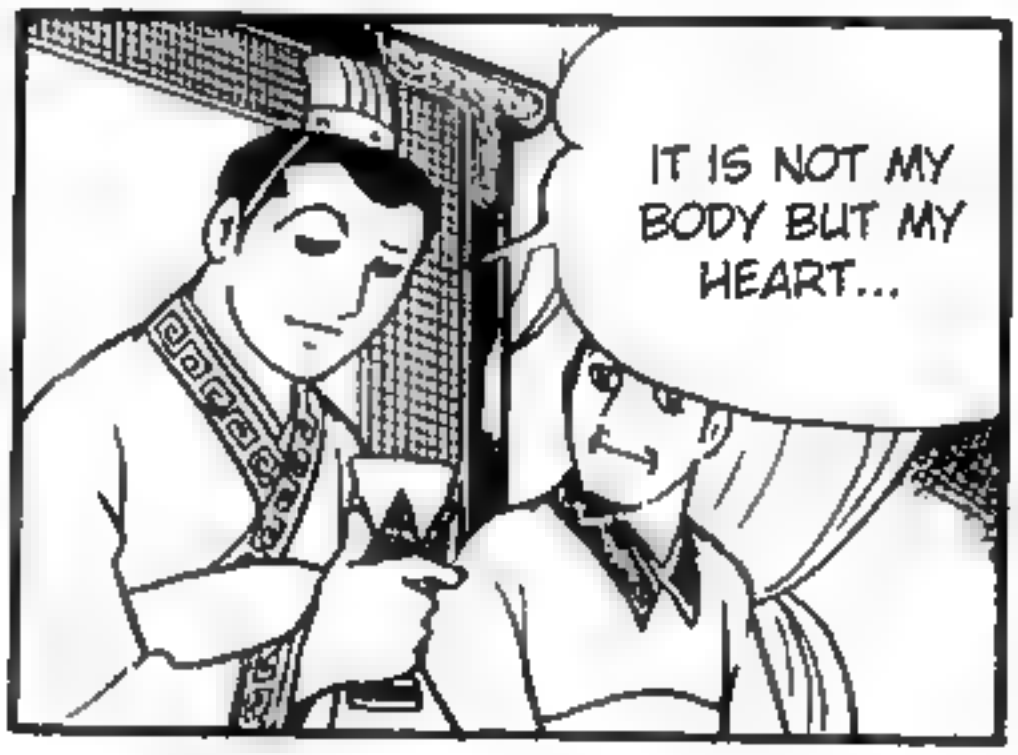
SERVANTS. PREPARE A BANQUET SO WE CAN PROPERLY RECEIVE LIU QI.



YES, THANK YOU.
NOW THAT ALL THE TROUBLE IS BEHIND US, LET US ENJOY THE MEAL AND CELEBRATE.

YOU SEEM RATHER UNWELL. ARE YOU FEELING ILL?

YOUR HEART?


IT IS NOT MY BODY BUT MY HEART...

MY STEP-MOTHER PLANS TO KILL ME FOR SHE WISHES TO MAKE LIU CONG THE HEIR.

PERHAPS YOUR FEELINGS COULD EVENTUALLY SWAY HER HEART.

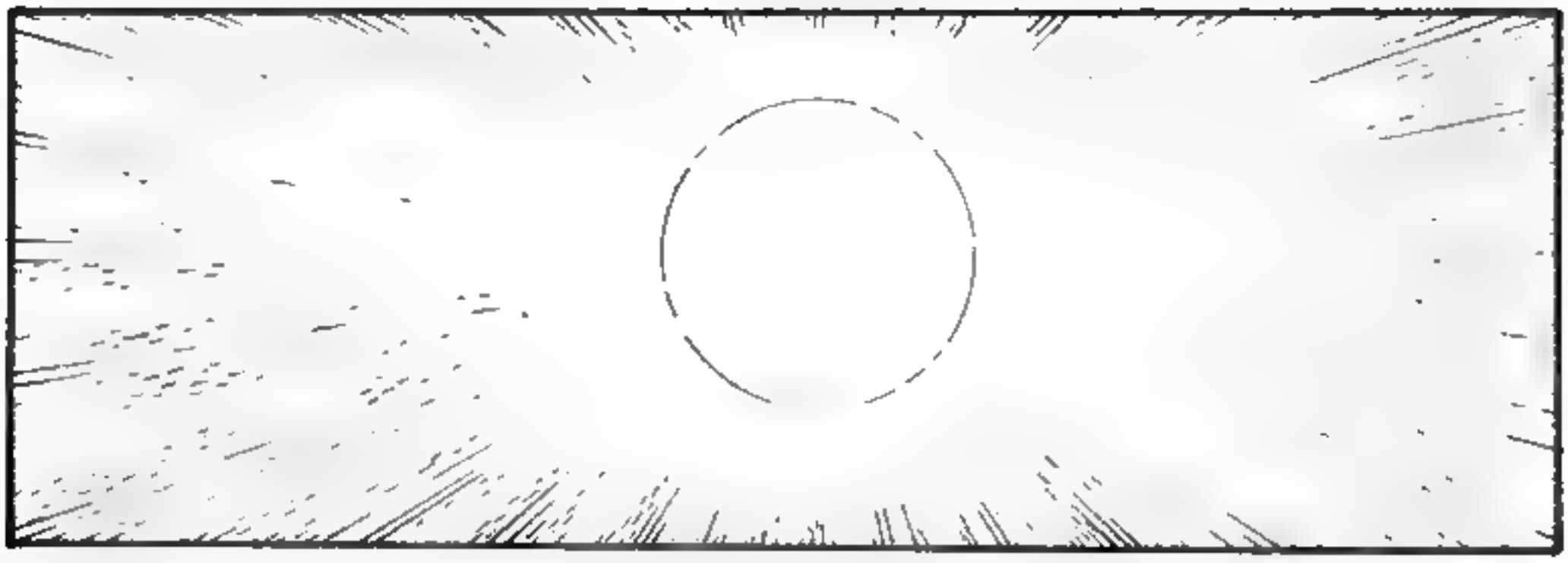
AS A MAN OF CONFUCIUS, I'M AFRAID I DO NOT HAVE BETTER ADVICE THAN TO BE FILIAL.

DOES SIR HAVE ANY ADVICE ON HOW TO ESCAPE THIS PREDICAMENT?

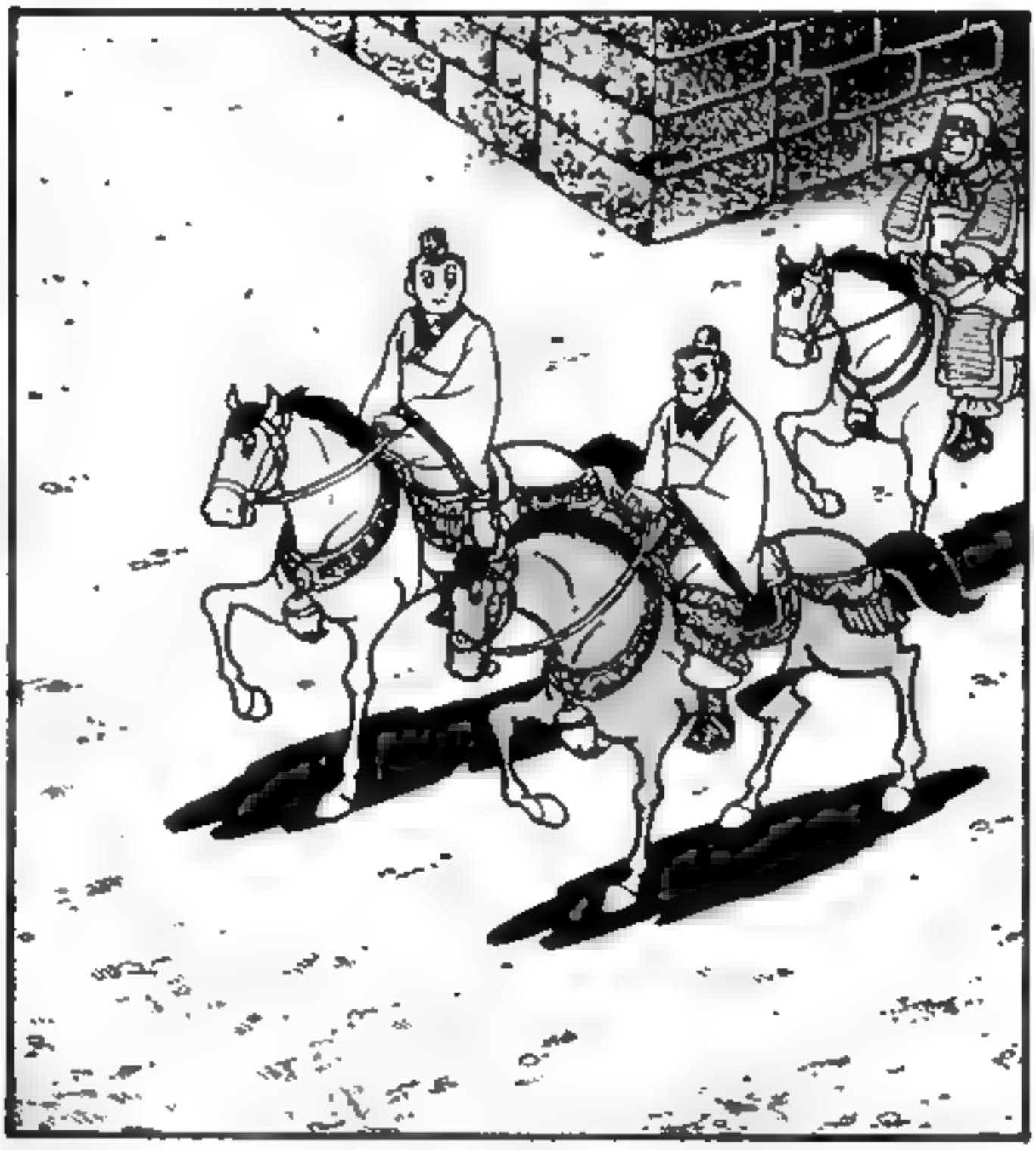
IF ONLY THAT WERE SO...

.....

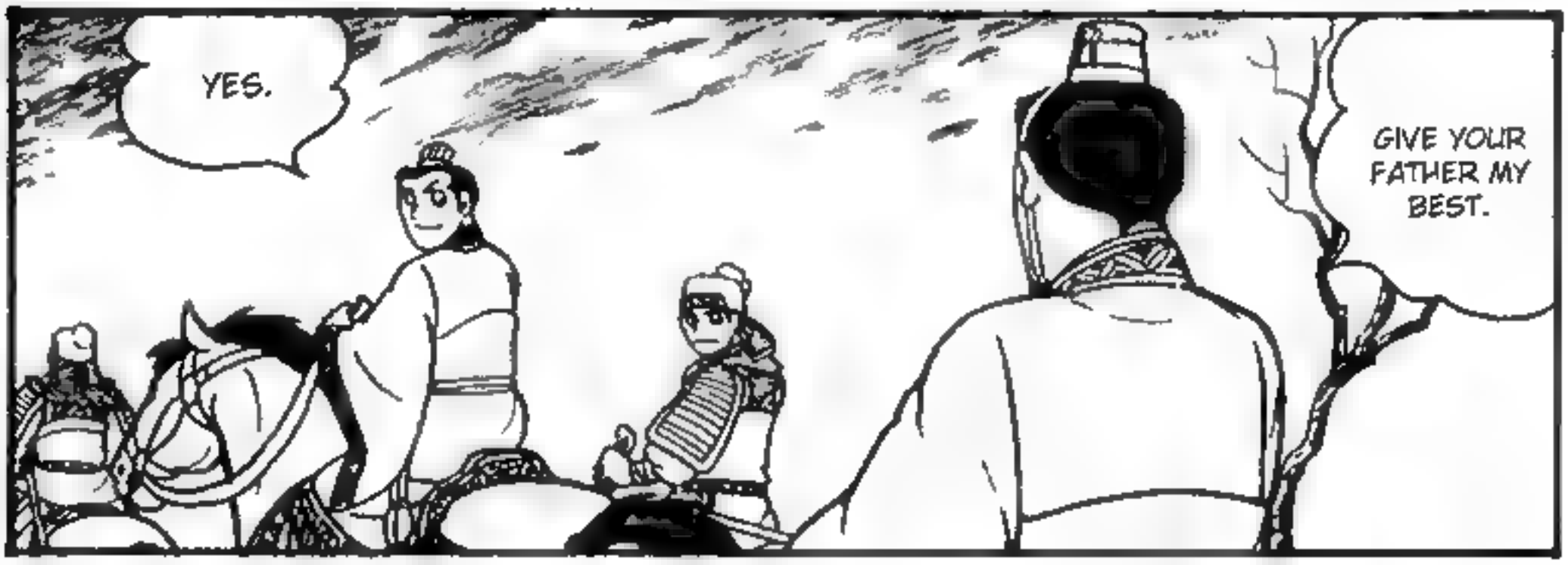
I DO NOT WISH TO RETURN TO JINGZHOU...

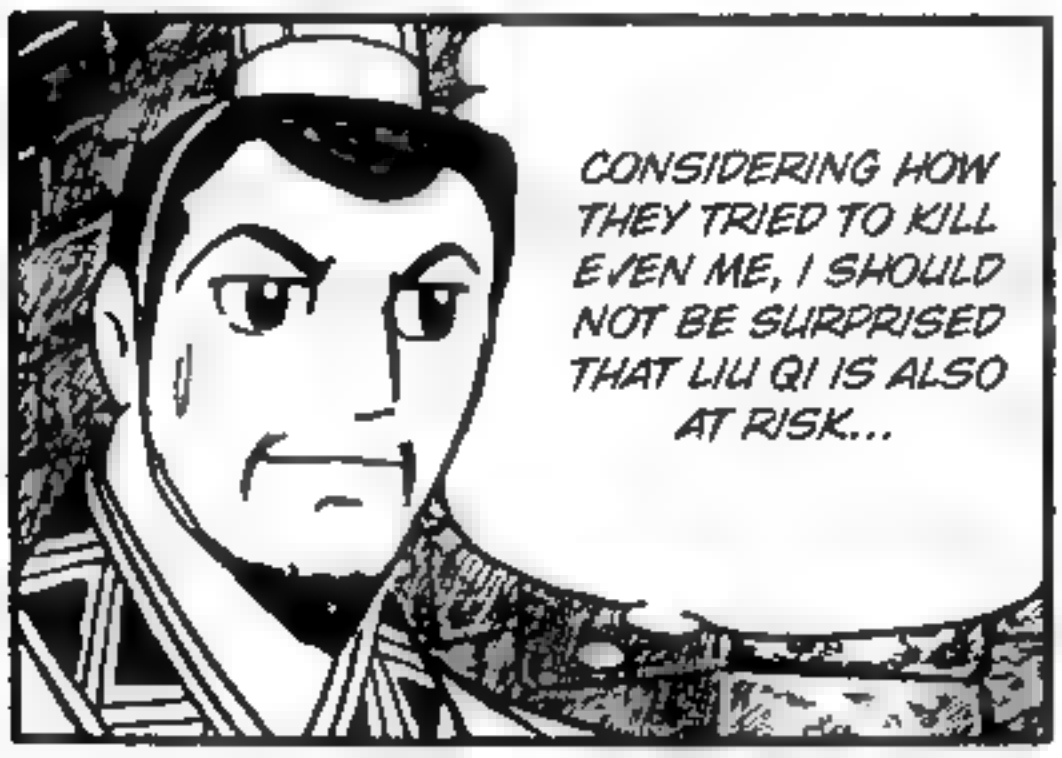


THANK YOU FOR SEEING ME OFF, SIR.



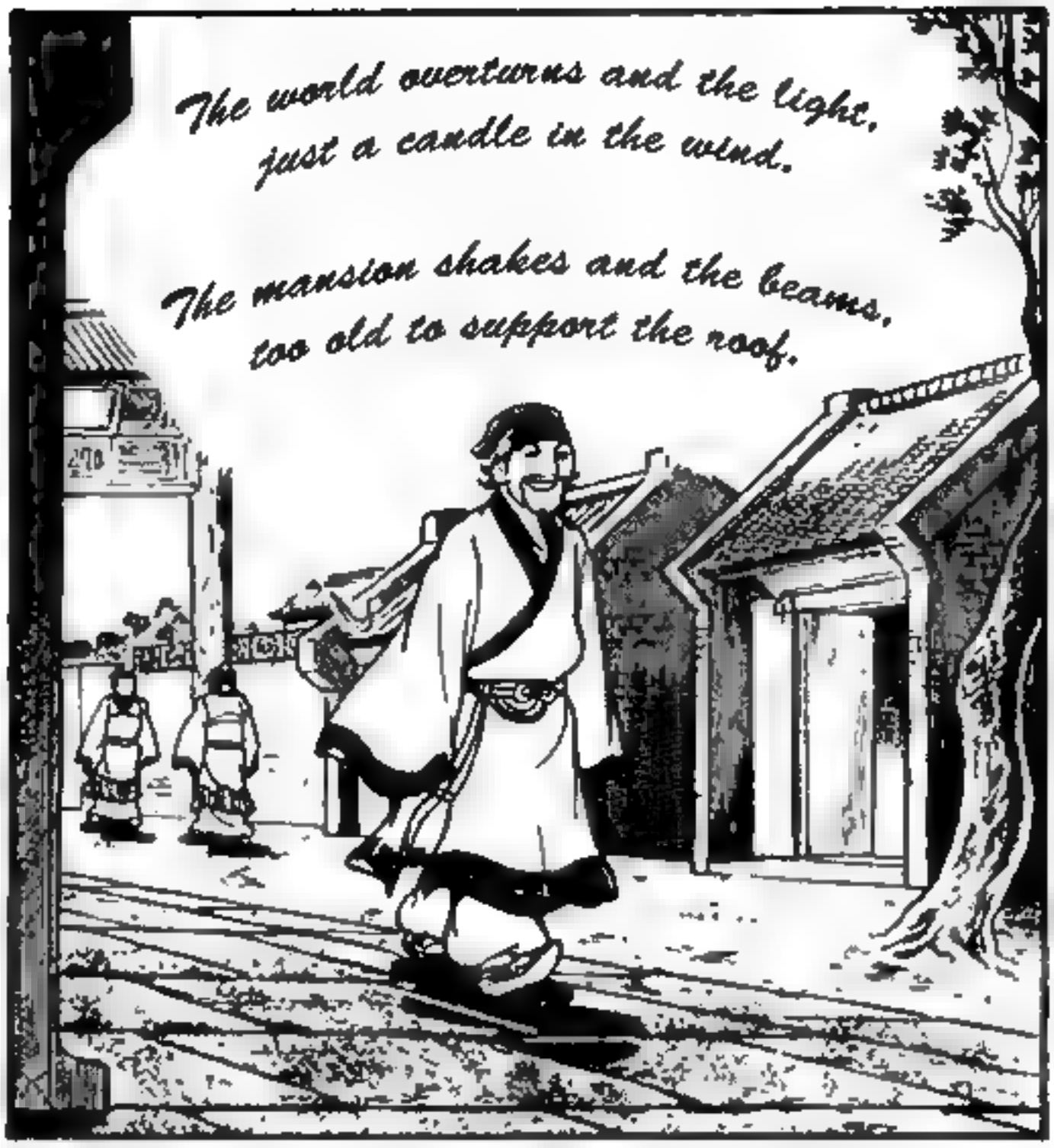
PLEASE DO TAKE CARE.


YES.
GIVE YOUR FATHER MY BEST.


CONSIDERING HOW THEY TRIED TO KILL EVEN ME, I SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED THAT LIU QI IS ALSO AT RISK...

HOW PITIFUL... HAVING TO LIVE UNDER CONSTANT FEAR OF HIS MOTHER...

HM?


The world overturns and the light,
just a candle in the wind.
The mansion shakes and the beams,
too old to support the roof.

yet the wise lord
seeking a sage
cannot recognize
him.
The sage in the
mountains comes out
seeking a wise lord,

COULD HE BE THE FULONG OR FENGCHU THAT MASTER SHUI JING SPOKE OF?

THE WISE LORD SEEKING A SAGE CANNOT RECOGNIZE HIM...?

EXCUSE ME THERE.

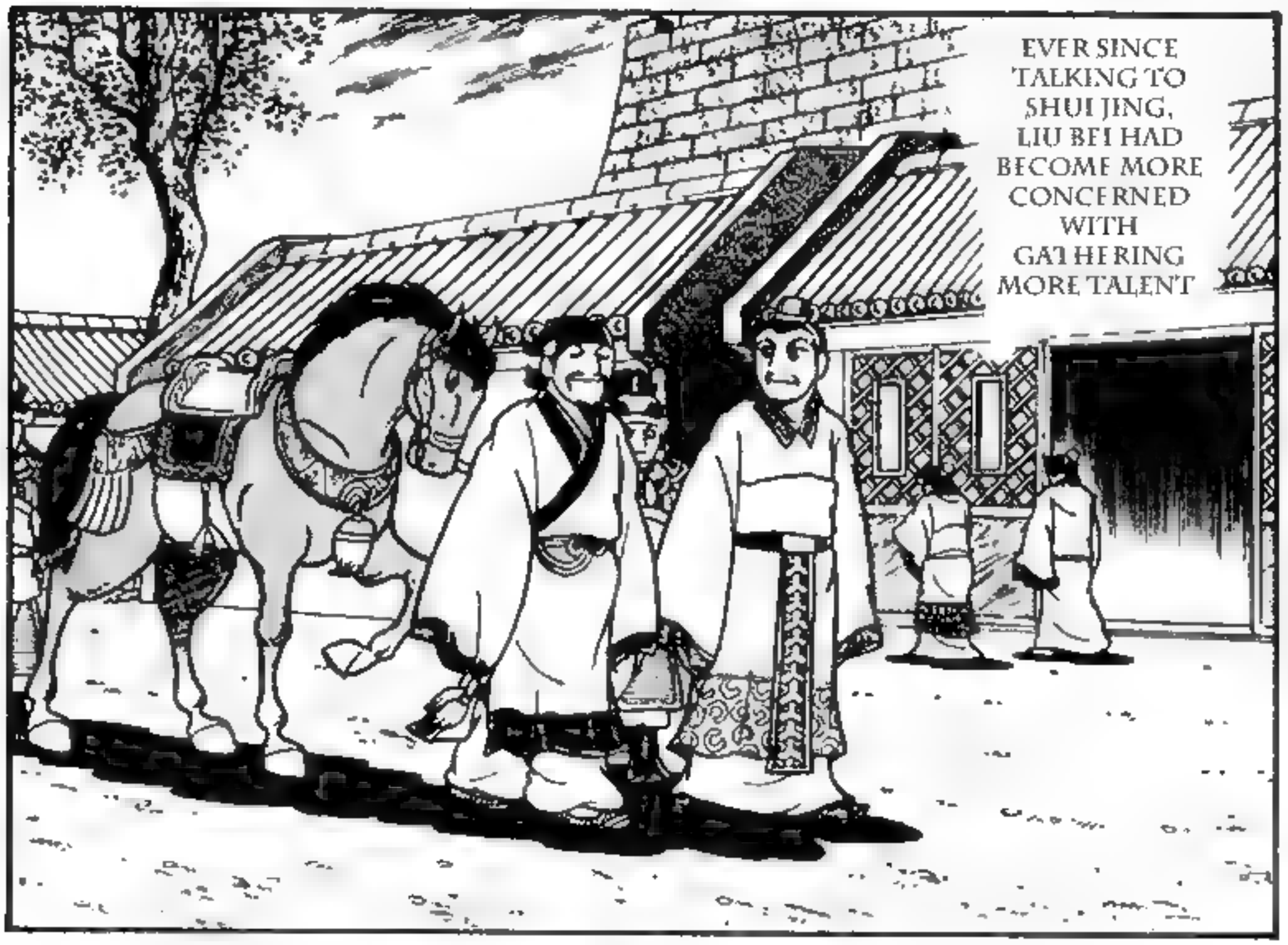
YES. I CAN'T HELP BUT FIND YOUR SONG VERY INTRIGUING.

DOES SIR REFER TO ME?

WELL, THAT MIGHT BE QUITE INTERE-STING.

I GLADLY ACCEPT YOUR OFFER.

OH? INVITING A COMPLETE STRANGER SUCH AS MYSELF?
MIGHT WE TALK A LITTLE MORE OVER SOME DRINKS?


EVER SINCE TALKING TO SHUI JING, LIU BEI HAD BECOME MORE CONCERNED WITH GATHERING MORE TALENT

YES, THANK YOU.
LET US DRINK.

I AM LIU BEI XUANDE.

AH, THAT'S RIGHT. WE STILL HAVEN'T INTRODUCED OURSELVES.

WHY YES.

YOU MEAN THE LORD OF THIS CASTLE!?

LIU BEI!?

MY NAME IS SHAN FU. I AM A WANDERING SCHOLAR LEARNED IN THE ART OF WAR.

NO, NOT AT ALL.

FORGIVE MY INSOLENCE FOR NOT RECOGNIZING SIR.

BY THE WAY, MIGHT I TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT SIR'S HORSE?

YES, SIR.

YOU THERE, GO BRING MY HORSE.

YES, JUST AS I THOUGHT... THIS IS A HEXED HORSE.

YES, I'VE ALREADY HEARD FROM ANOTHER.

4 WHITE LEGS AND THE WHITE SPOT ON ITS HEAD IS QUITE AN ILL OMEN. IT IS SAID TO BRING BAD LUCK UPON ITS RIDER.

THAT WAS ONLY BECAUSE THE HORSE DID NOT WISH TO DIE. IT HAD NO INTENTION OF SAVING YOU, SIR.

BUT THIS HORSE IS DIFFERENT. IT EVEN SAVED MY LIFE BY CROSSING A TORRENT.

BUT THERE IS A WAY AROUND THAT.

IT WILL BRING BAD LUCK UPON ITS RIDER FOR SURE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?

GIVE THIS HORSE TO ONE OF SIR'S SUBJECTS TEMPORARILY. ONCE BAD LUCK HAS BEFALLEN HIM, SIR WILL BE ABLE TO SAFELY RIDE THE HORSE.

YOU ASK ME TO COME AND NOW YOU ASK ME TO LEAVE? QUITE A FICKLE MAN, YOU ARE!

?

I'M AFRAID I MUST ASK YOU TO LEAVE.

I DO NOT LIKE SUCH MEN.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE A MAN OF PRINCIPLE BUT IT SEEMS I'VE MISJUDGED YOU. TO THINK YOU'D SO CASUALLY ADVISE ME TO PUT MY FELLOW SUBJECT AT RISK...

HAHA...

SO PLEASE, I ASK YOU TO LEAVE MY PREMISES AT ONCE.

JUST WHAT IS SO FUNNY?

HA HA HA

HA HA HA

WHAT I SAID JUST NOW WAS ONLY A TEST TO SEE WHAT SIR WAS REALLY LIKE. I HOPE I HAVEN'T OFFENDED YOU, SIR.

THE BENEVOLENT LIU BEI REALLY IS AS VIRTUOUS AS THE RUMOURS SAY.

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY WISH TO SERVE SUCH A MAN AND SO I PURPOSELY SANG THAT SONG IN ORDER TO MEET YOU, SIR.

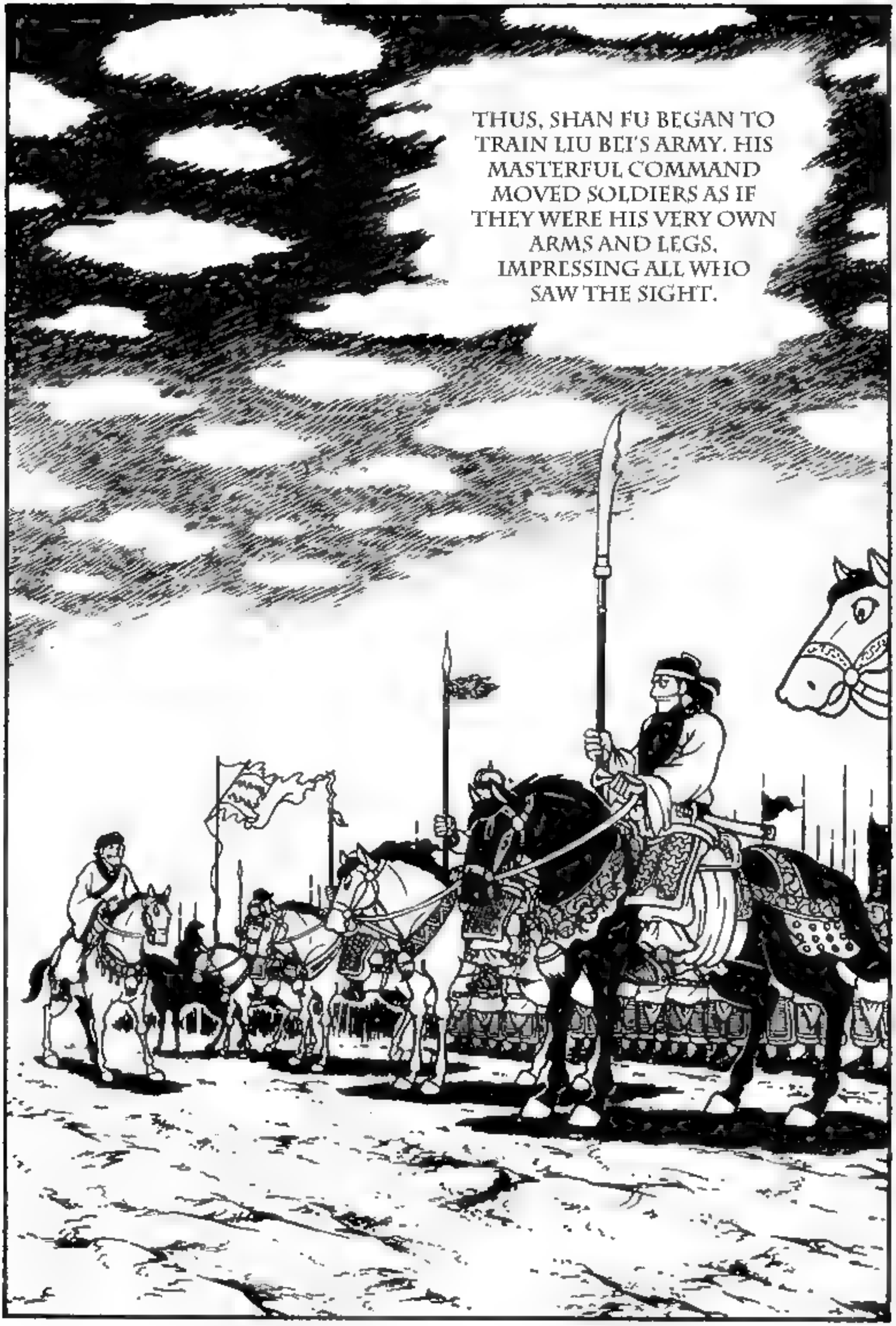
DURING MY TRAVELS, I'VE HEARD MANY TIMES FROM THE PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR KINDNESS.

AH, SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS!

IF SIR CAN FIND A USE FOR ME, I SHALL USE ALL MY LEARNINGS TO BE OF SERVICE.

I GLADLY WELCOME YOUR ASSISTANCE, SHAN FU.

I SHALL WORK TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITIES.
I SHALL HEREBY PLACE MY ARMY IN YOUR HANDS BY APPOINTING YOU AS THE COMMANDING ADVISER.


THUS, SHAN FU BEGAN TO TRAIN LIU BEI'S ARMY. HIS MASTERFUL COMMAND MOVED SOLDIERS AS IF THEY WERE HIS VERY OWN ARMS AND LEGS, IMPRESSING ALL WHO SAW THE SIGHT.

AT THIS TIME, CAO CAO WAS MAKING PREPARATIONS TO CONQUER THE SOUTH
FIRST, HE PLACED CAO REN AS THE COMMANDER AND SENT HIM TO FANCHENG WITH GENERALS LI DIAN, LU XIANG, AND LU KUANG AT FANCHENG, CAO REN WAS TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE FOR ANY WEAKNESSES IN JING ZHOU

YES, COM-
MANDER.

LIU BEI HAS SUDDENLY STARTED STRENGTHNING HIS ARMY AT XINYE?

HMM.

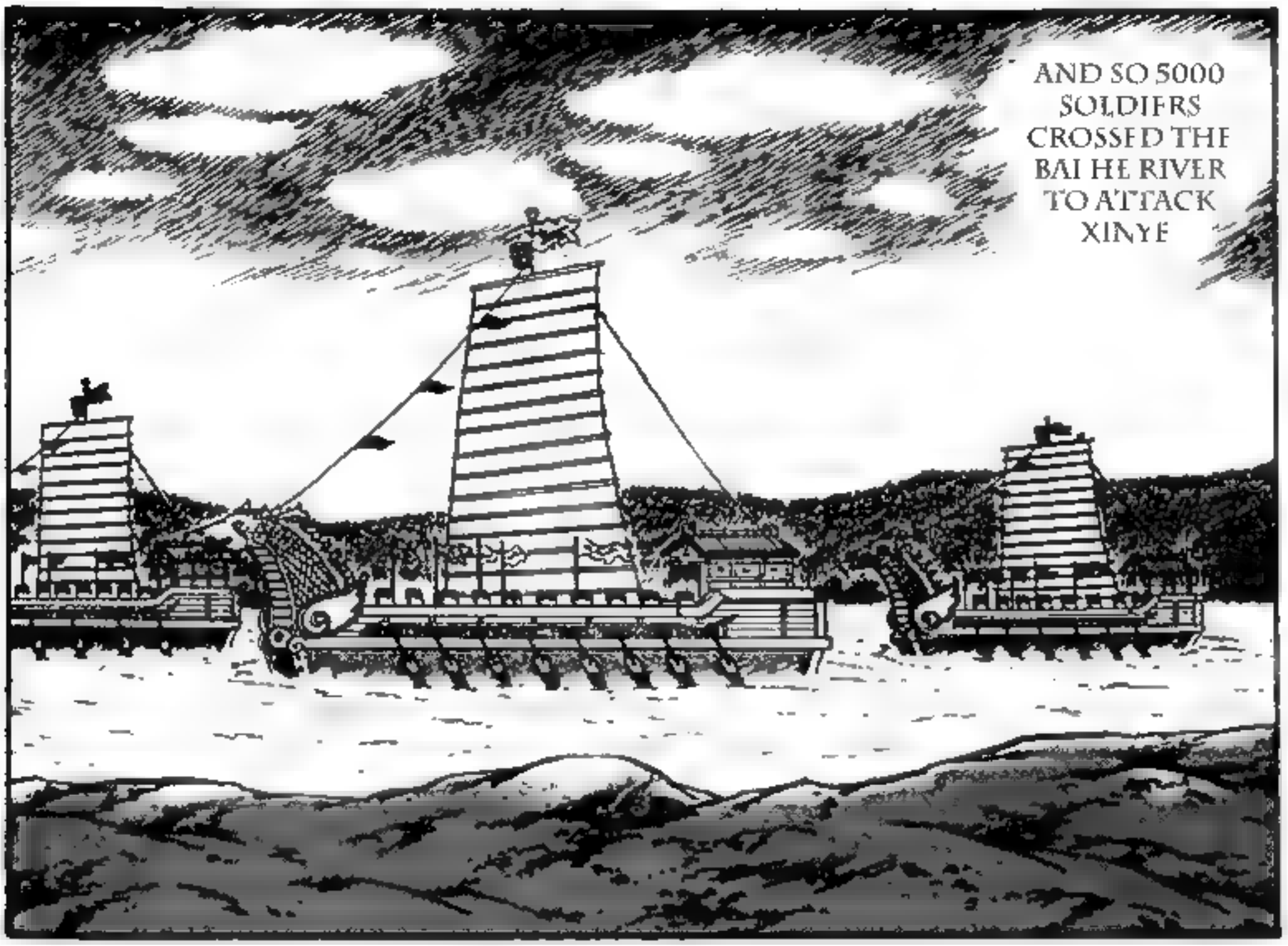
YES, IT WOULD BE BEST TO ATTACK HIM NOW.

IN MY OPINION, CAPTURING JINGZHOU WILL BE MUCH HARDER IF LIU BEI'S ARMY IS GIVEN ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE.

THEN 5000 SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO ANNHILATE THEM.

AROUND 2000, SIR.
HOW MANY DOES LIU BEI'S ARMY AT XINYE NUMBER?

YES, SIR.
ALRIGHT, LU XIANG, LU KUANG. I ORDER YOU TWO TO GO AND CAPTURE XINYE.


AND SO 5000 SOLDIERS CROSSED THE BAI HE RIVER TO ATTACK XINYE

WHAT!? CAO REN'S SOLDIERS ARE COMING THIS WAY?

MN..

YES, AND THEY'RE SAID TO NUMBER ROUGHLY 5000.

SINCE OUR ARMY IS 2000-STRONG AND OUR ENEMIES ARE ONLY 5000-STRONG, THIS SHOULD SERVE AS GOOD PRACTICE.

SHAN FU, WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?

THERE ARE RULES IN WAR AS IN ALL THINGS. BEING OUTNUMBERED ISN'T NECCESSARILY A DISADVANTAGE AS THERE ARE CERTAIN RULES WE CAN FOLLOW.

PRAC-TICE?

SO DON'T WORRY, IT'S ALL A MATTER OF LURING AND DIVIDING UP THE ENEMY INTO SMALLER FORCES TO ELIMINATE THEM ONE BY ONE.

I WONDER IF IT'LL REALLY GO AS EASILY AS HE SAYS...?

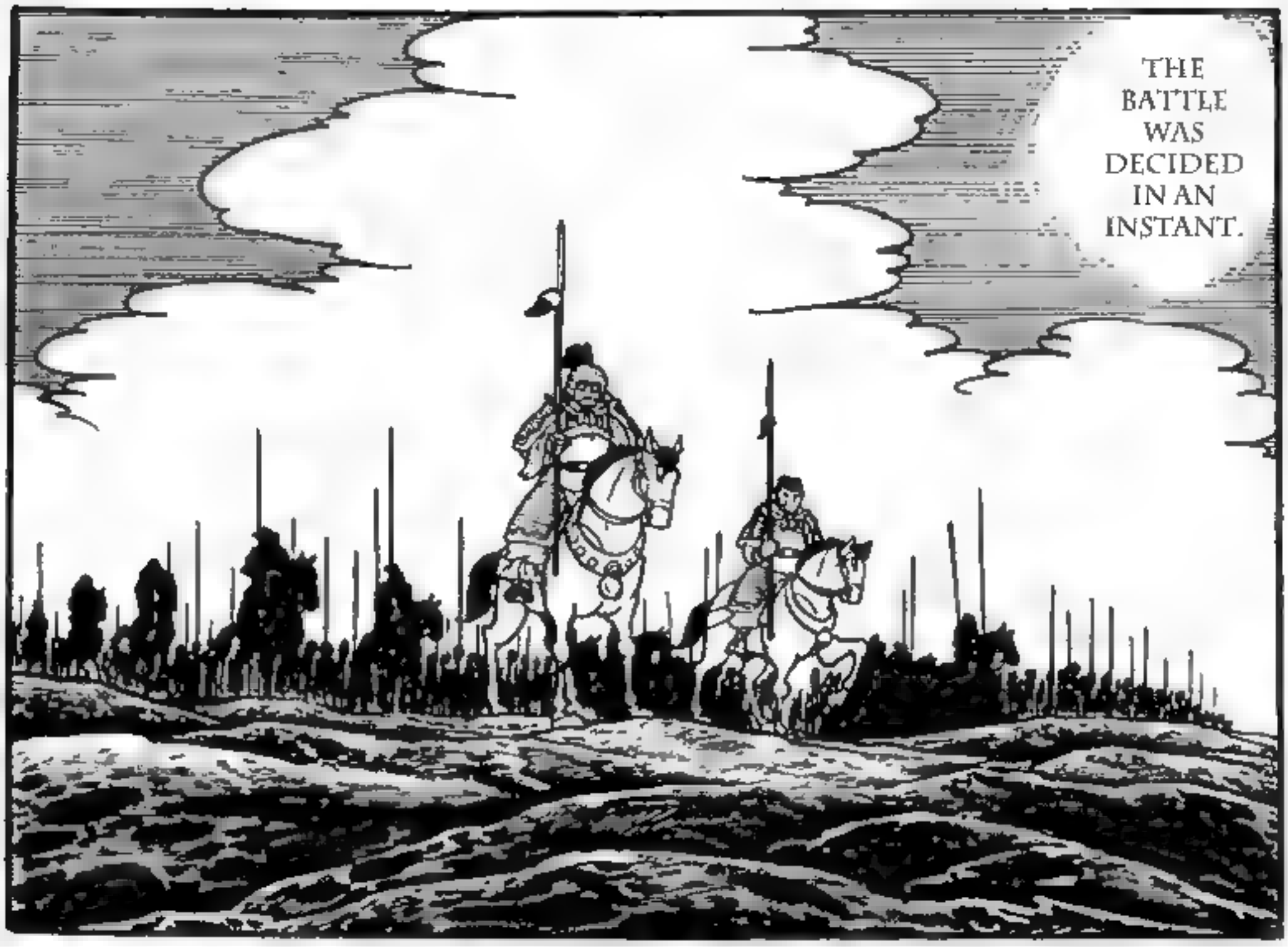
JUST DO AS YOU'VE BEEN DOING ALL ALONG DURING OUR PRACTICES.

BUT HE WAS MORE THAN CONFIDENT OF HIS VICTORY. THAT WAS BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THAT BATTLES WERE DECIDED NOT BY CHANCE NOR HEAVEN'S WILL, BUT BY SPECIFIC RULES OF WAR.

THIS WOULD BE THE FIRST TIME SHAN FU WOULD COMMAND AN ARMY IN AN ACTUAL BATTLE

NOT ONLY THAT,

HE HAD 3 FEARED GENERALS ON HIS SIDE

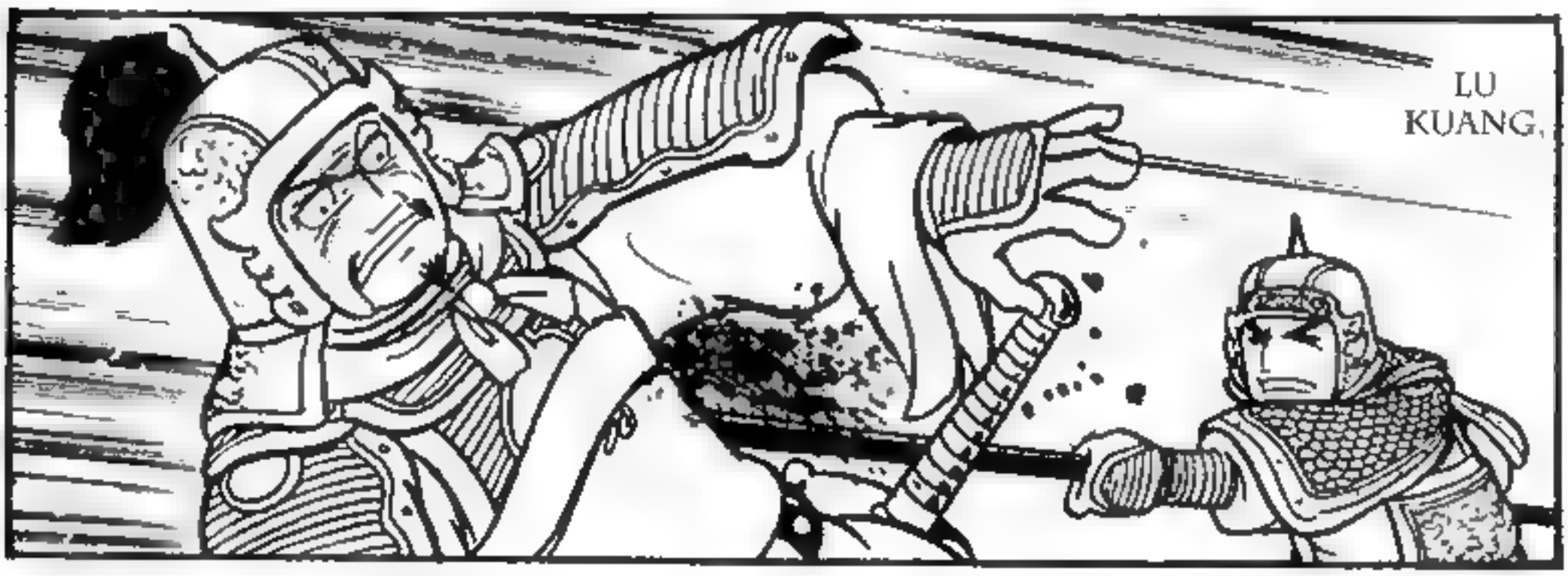

THE BATTLE WAS DECIDED IN AN INSTANT.

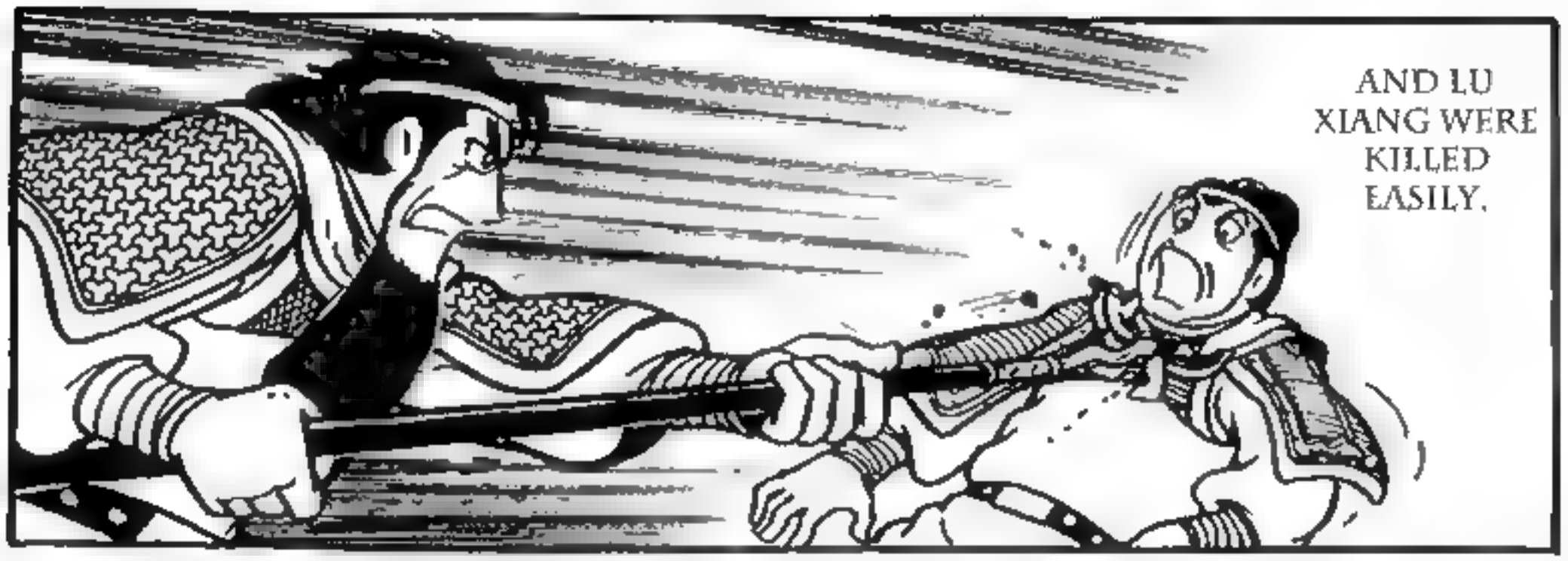
THE ENEMY SOLDIERS WERE EASILY LURED.

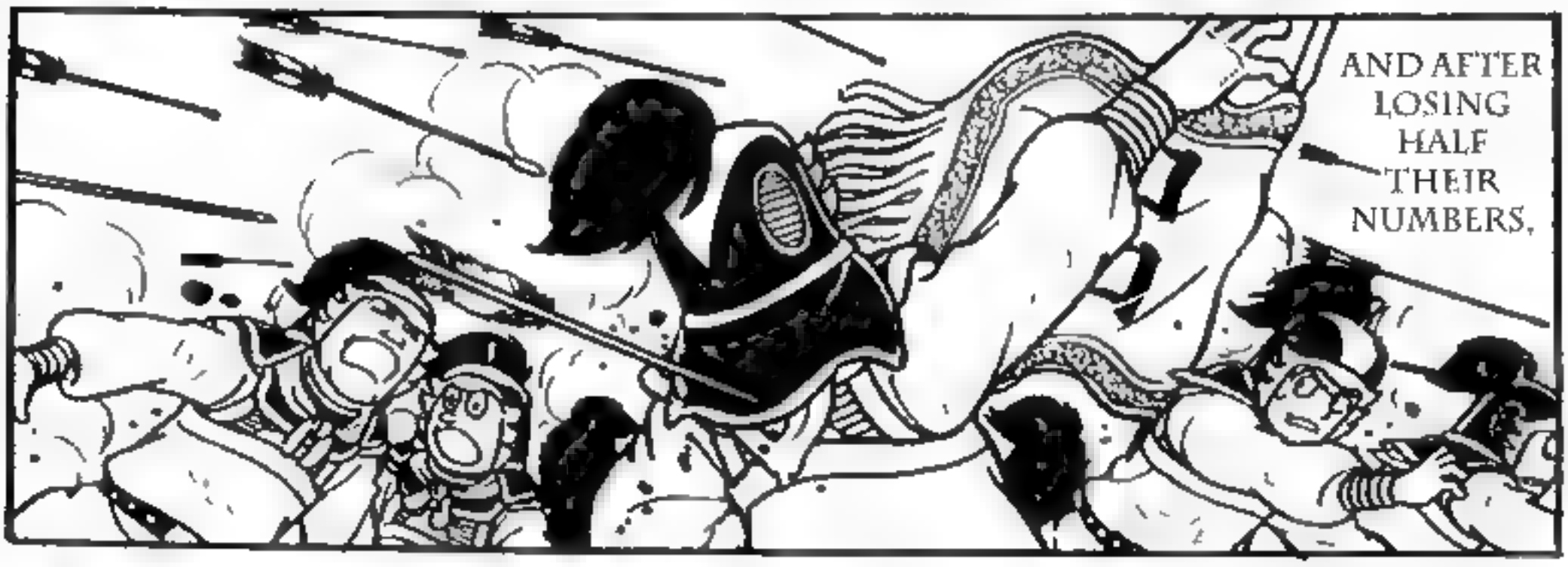
ZHANG
FEI,

AND FOUND
THEMSELVES
SURROUNDED
BY GUAN YU,

AND ZHAO
YUN'S
FORCES.


LU
KUANG,


AND LU XIANG WERE KILLED EASILY.


AND AFTER LOSING HALF THEIR NUMBERS,

THE ENEMIES FLED IN PANIC BACK TO FANCHENG.

WHAT!? LU XIANG AND LU KUANG WERE BOTH KILLED!?

THIS CALLS FOR AN ALL-OUT ASSAULT!

HOW COULD THIS BE...!

WHAT IS IT, LI DIAN?

COMMANDER CAO REN, PLEASE WAIT.

DOES SIR WISH TO REPEAT THE SAME MISTAKE AS THEM?

LU KUANG AND LU XIANG LOST BECAUSE THEY UNDERESTIMATED THE ENEMY.

NO, BUT LIU BEI IS NO ORDINARY MAN. HE MUST NOT BE UNDERESTI-MATED.

ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT I'LL LOSE AS WELL?

KNOWING ONE'S ENEMY IS KEY TO VICTORY, SIR. ACKNOWLEDGING A FEARFUL ENEMY IS, IN NO WAY, A SIGN OF COWARDICE.

ONE NEEDS TO BE DETERMINED AND CONFIDENT TO ACHIEVE VICTORY! HOW CAN WE WIN IF YOU'RE SCARED OF THE ENEMY EVEN BEFORE THE FIGHT STARTS!?

ARE YOU KIDDING ME!? THE ENEMIES ARE ONLY 2000 STRONG!

WHAT WE MUST DO NOW IS REPORT TO CHANCELLOR CAO CAO AND ASK FOR REINFORCEMENTS WHILE PLANNING A SOLID STRATEGY.

I'LL MOBILIZE OUR ENTIRE ARMY HERE AND AVENGE LU KUANG AND LU XIANG'S DEATHS!

IF I ASK THE CHANCELLOR FOR REINFORCEMENTS JUST TO FIGHT 2000 SOLDIERS, I WOULD BECOME THE WORLD'S LAUGHINGSTOCK!

WHAT!?

I CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A RECKLESS BATTLE. IF SIR WISHES TO FIGHT NO MATTER WHAT, THEN I SHALL REMAIN HERE TO GUARD FANCHENG.

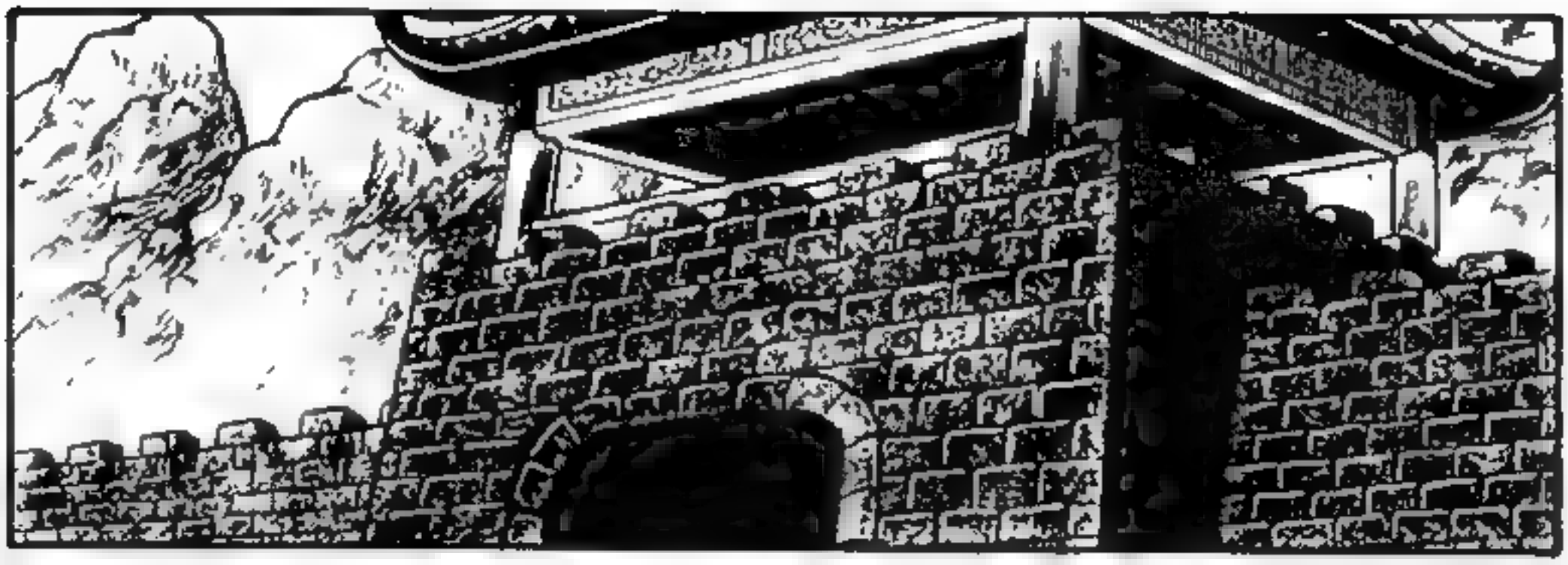
ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT I WOULD BETRAY YOU...?

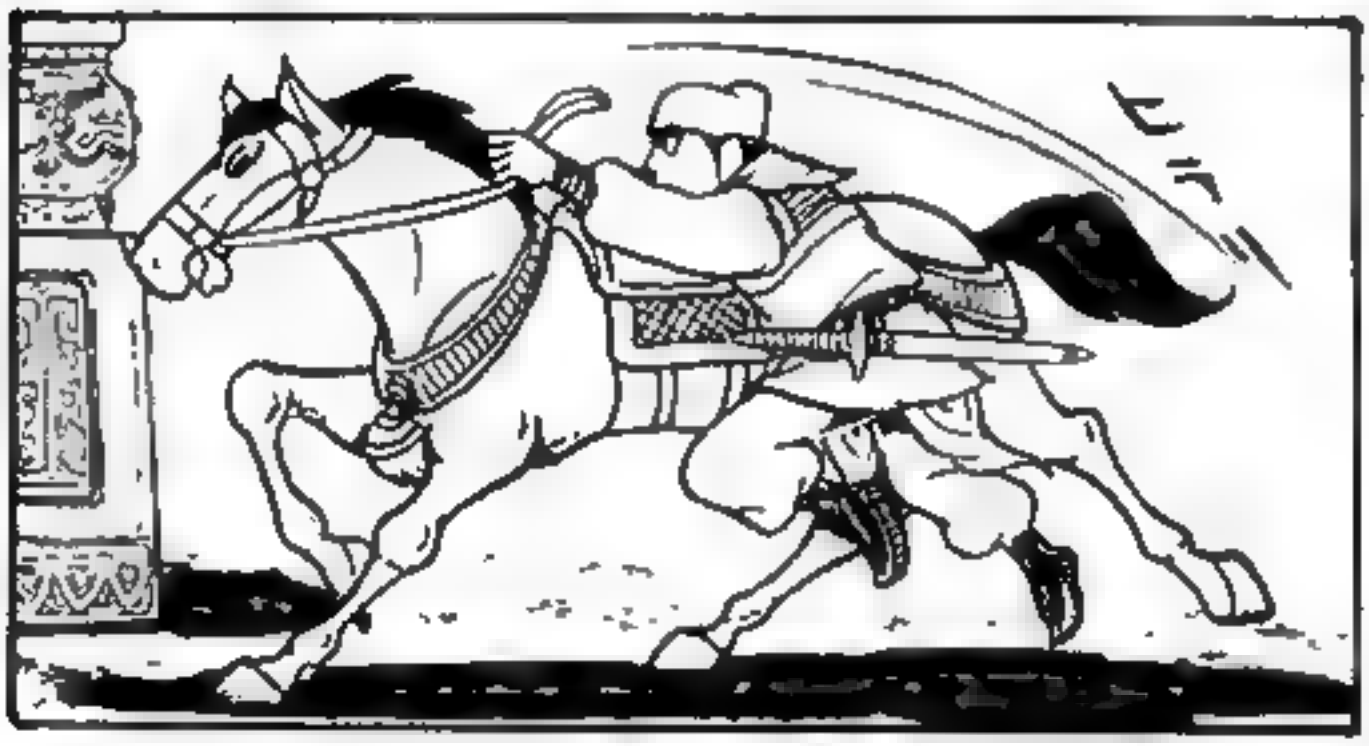
WHAT?

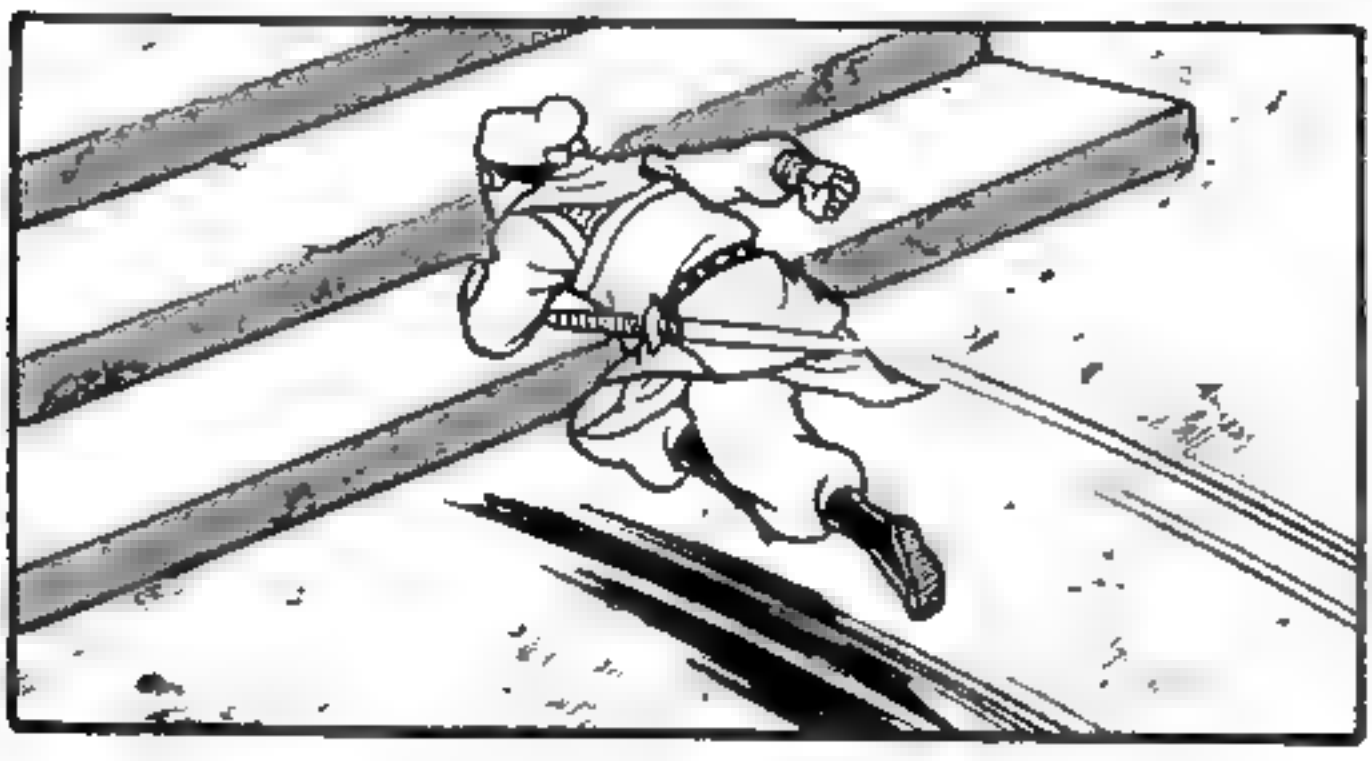
YOU WOULDN'T BE THINKING OTHER THOUGHTS, WOULD YOU...?

FINE, IF YOU DOUBT ME SO MUCH, THEN I SHALL PARTICIPATE IN THE BATTLE.

AND SO, CAO REN MOBILIZED HIS ENTIRE ARMY OF 25,000 SOLDIERS







CAO REN HAS MOBILIZED HIS ARMY AND HAVE ALREADY CROSSED THE BAI HE RIVER.
WHAT IS IT?

25,000!

HIS FORCES NUMBER 25,000 SOLDIERS.

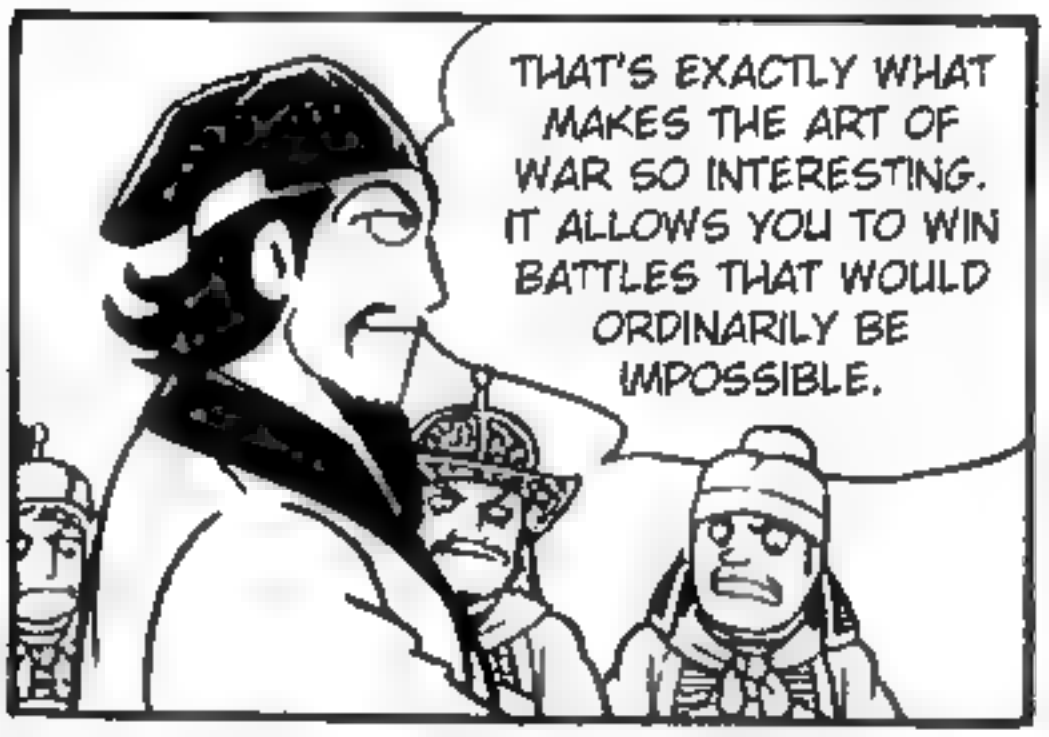
HOW MANY TIMES OUR ARMY IS THAT?

25,000!?

25,000 SOLDIERS WOULD MEAN CAO REN HAS MOBILIZED HIS ENTIRE ARMY. IT ALSO MEANS THAT FANCHENG IS EMPTY AT THE MOMENT.

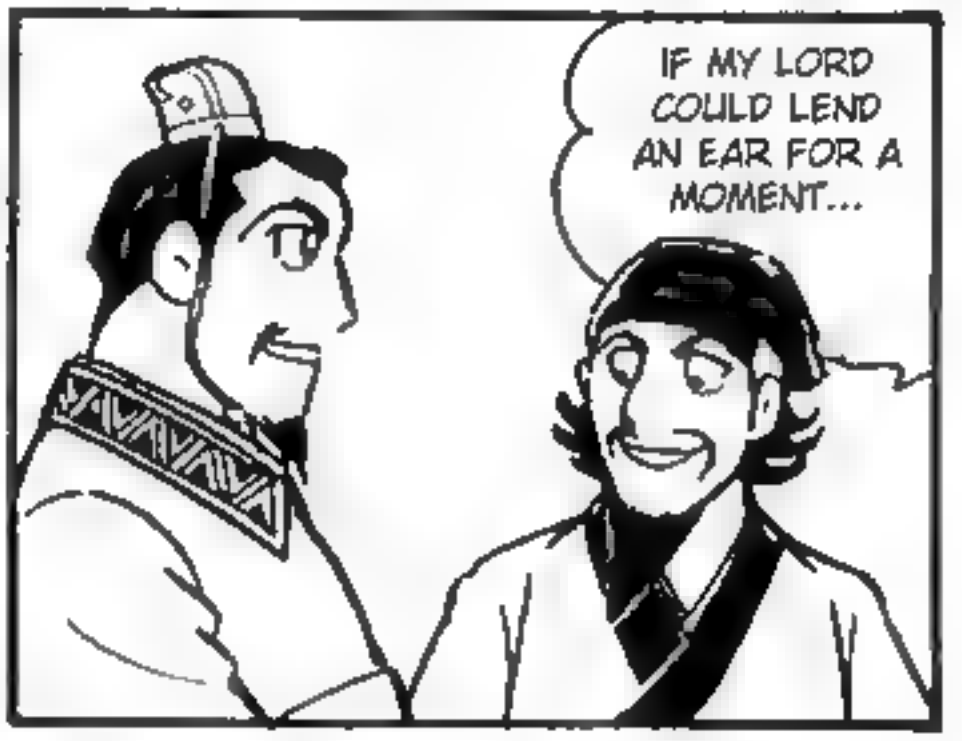
NOW, NOW, GENTLEMEN! THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR AT ALL.

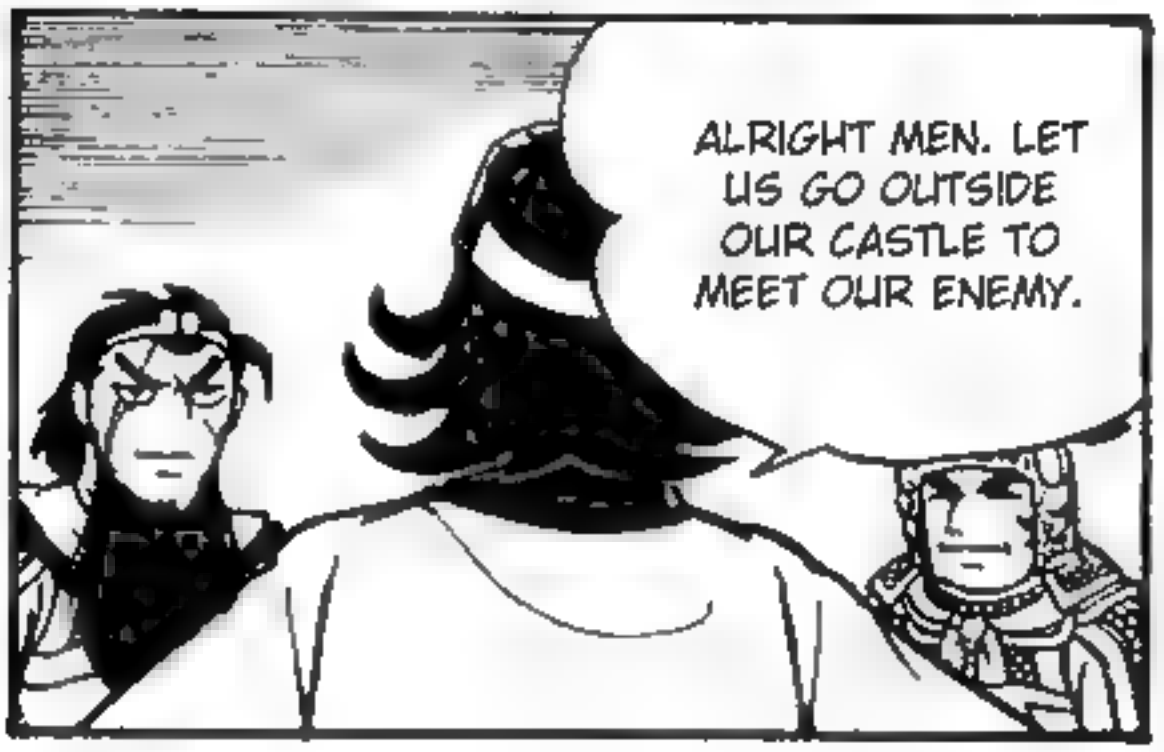
THIS WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO CAPTURE FANCHENG.


THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT MAKES THE ART OF WAR SO INTERESTING. IT ALLOWS YOU TO WIN BATTLES THAT WOULD ORDINARILY BE IMPOSSIBLE.

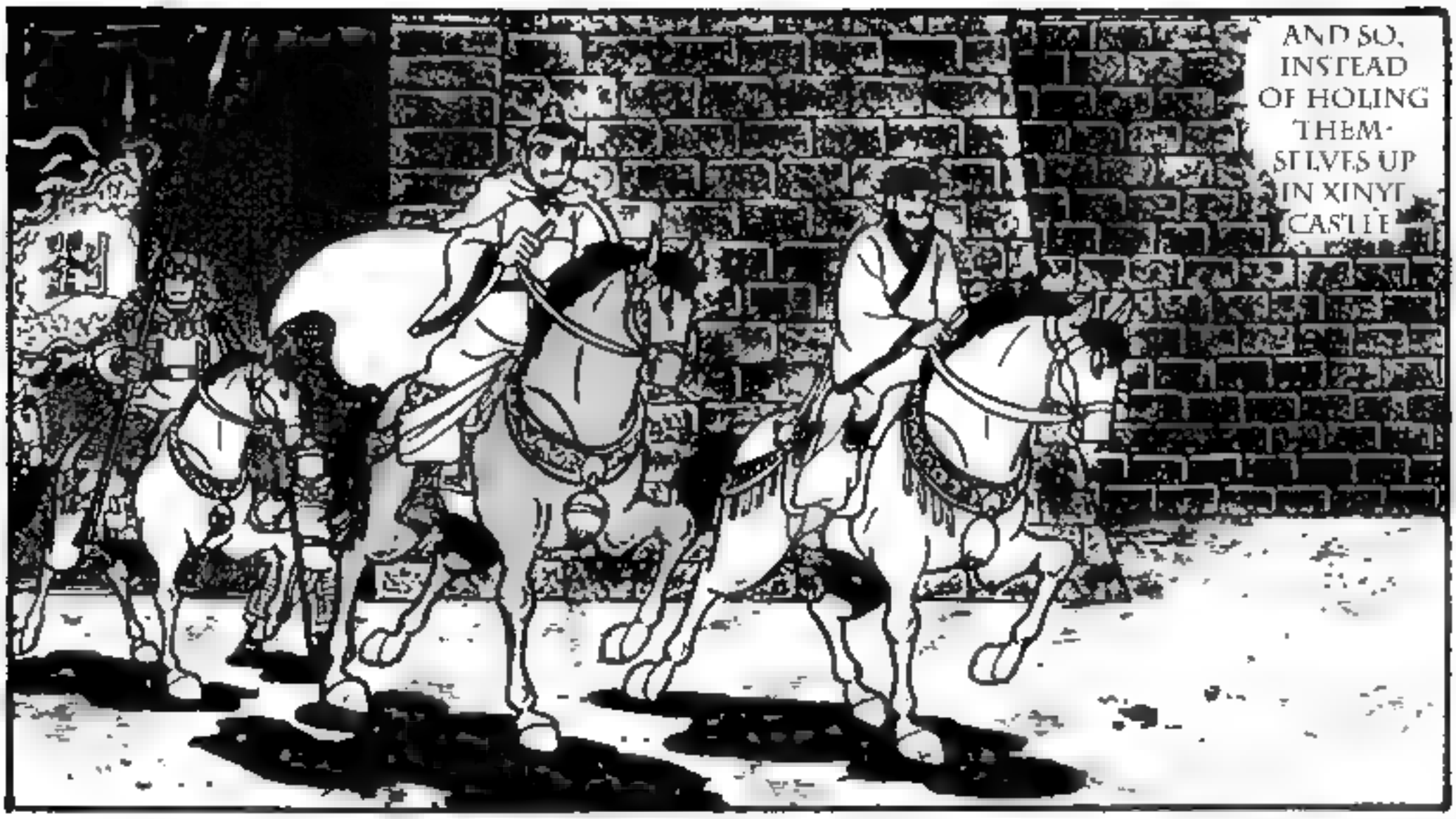
B-BUT WITH OUR NUMBERS, IT'LL BE HARD ENOUGH TO DEFEND XINYE. JUST HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO CAPTURE FANCHENG?

HMM, I SEE...

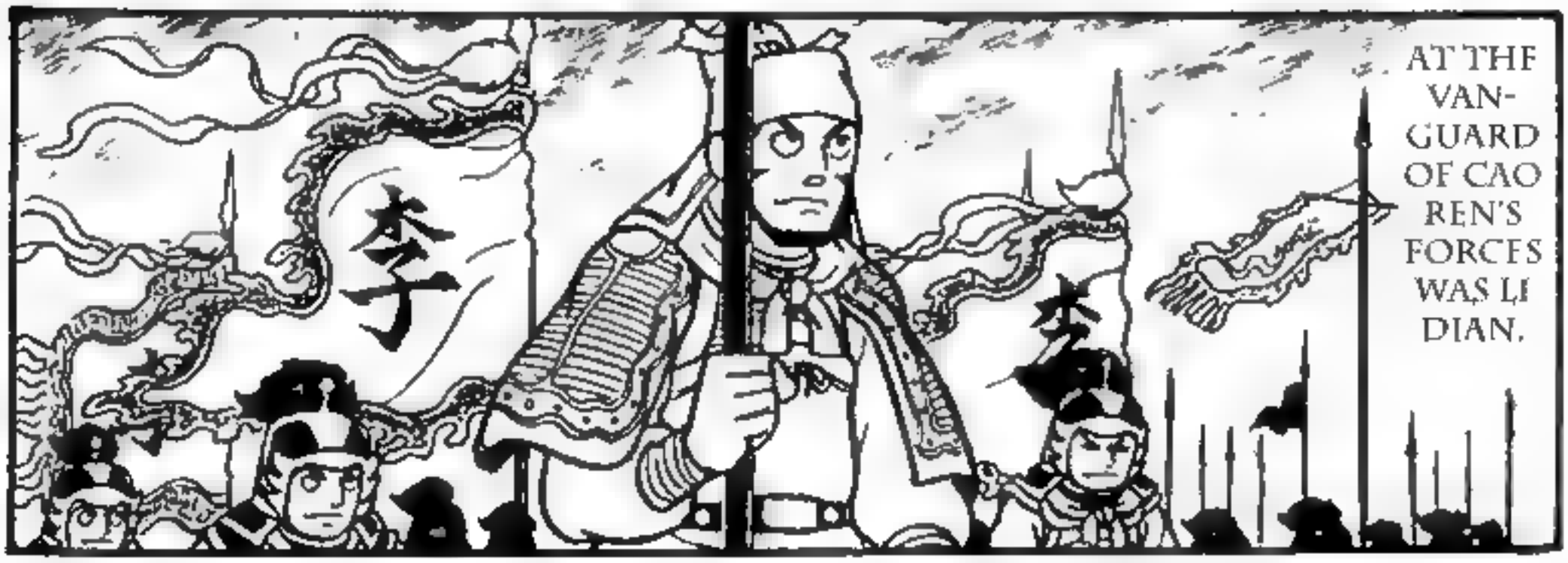

IF MY LORD COULD LEND AN EAR FOR A MOMENT...


ALRIGHT MEN. LET US GO OUTSIDE OUR CASTLE TO MEET OUR ENEMY.

I SHALL LEAVE IT TO YOU THEN.

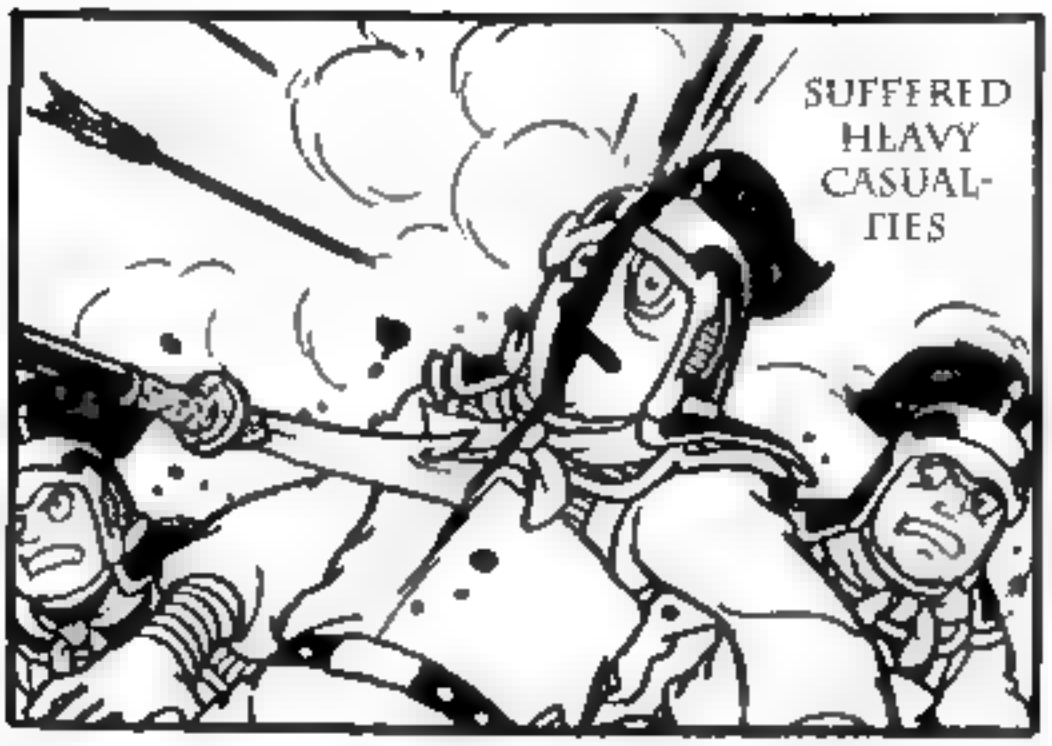

AND SO, INSTEAD OF HOLING THEM-SELVES UP IN XINYI CASTLE

LIU BEI'S ARMY CAME OUT TO MEET CAO REN'S ARMY.


AT THE VAN-GUARD OF CAO REN'S FORCES WAS LI DIAN.

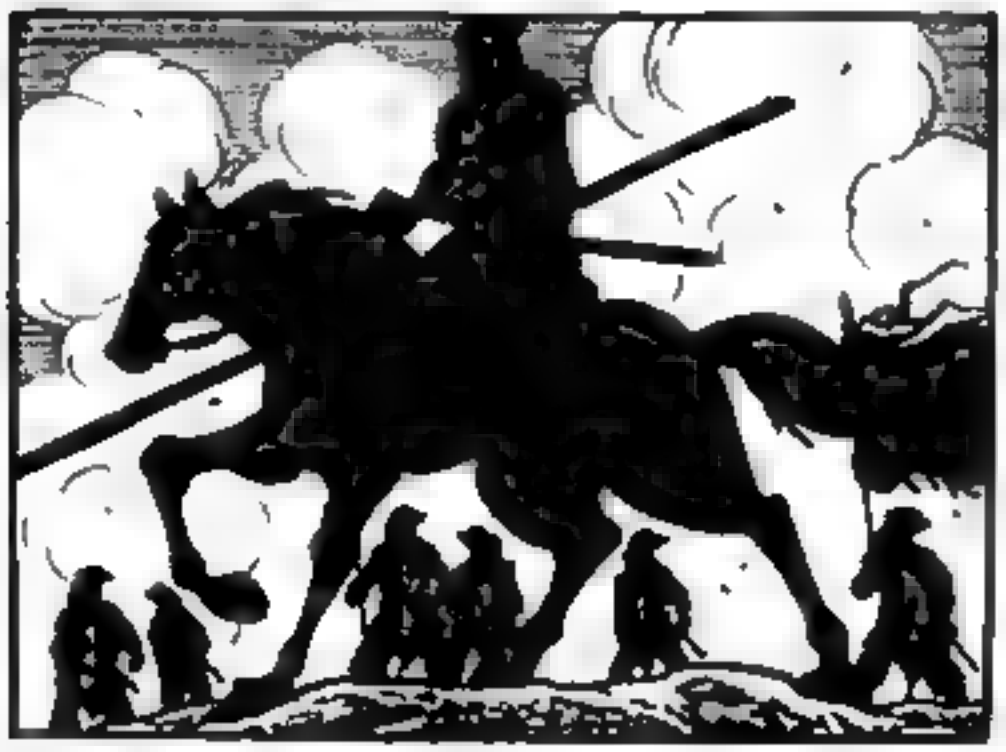
AND AT THE VANGUARD OF LIU BEI'S ARMY WAS ZHAO ZILONG

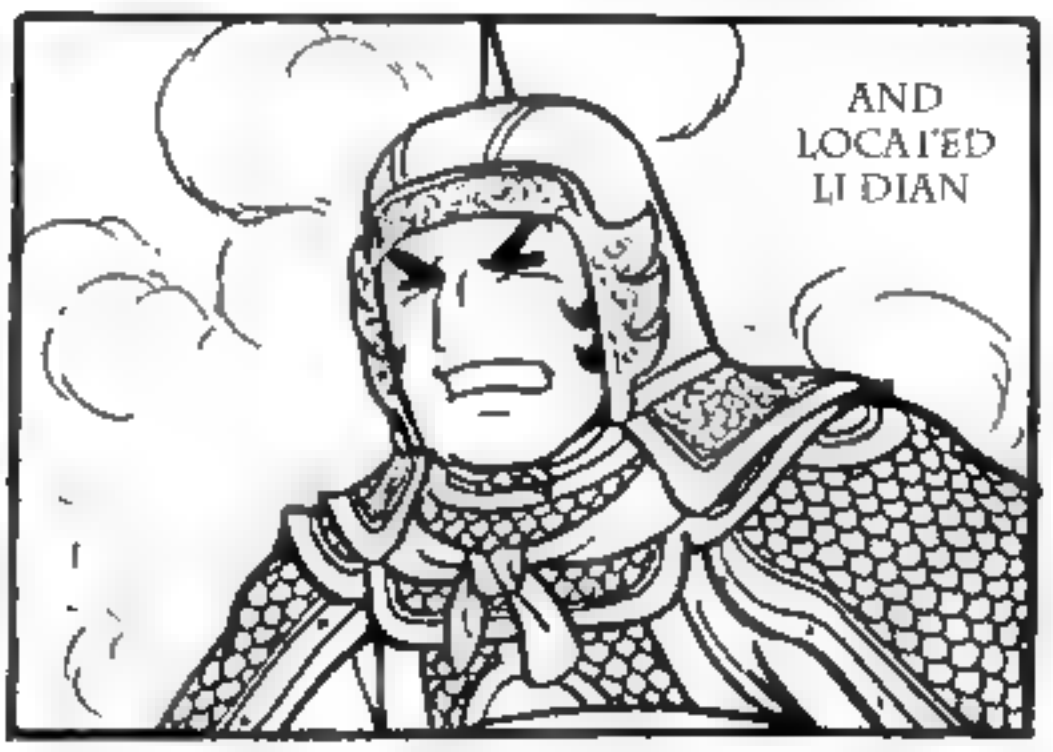
THE FIRST CONFRONTATION PROVED TO BE QUITE EVEN.


SUFFERED
HEAVY
CASUAL-
TIES

BOTH
SIDES.

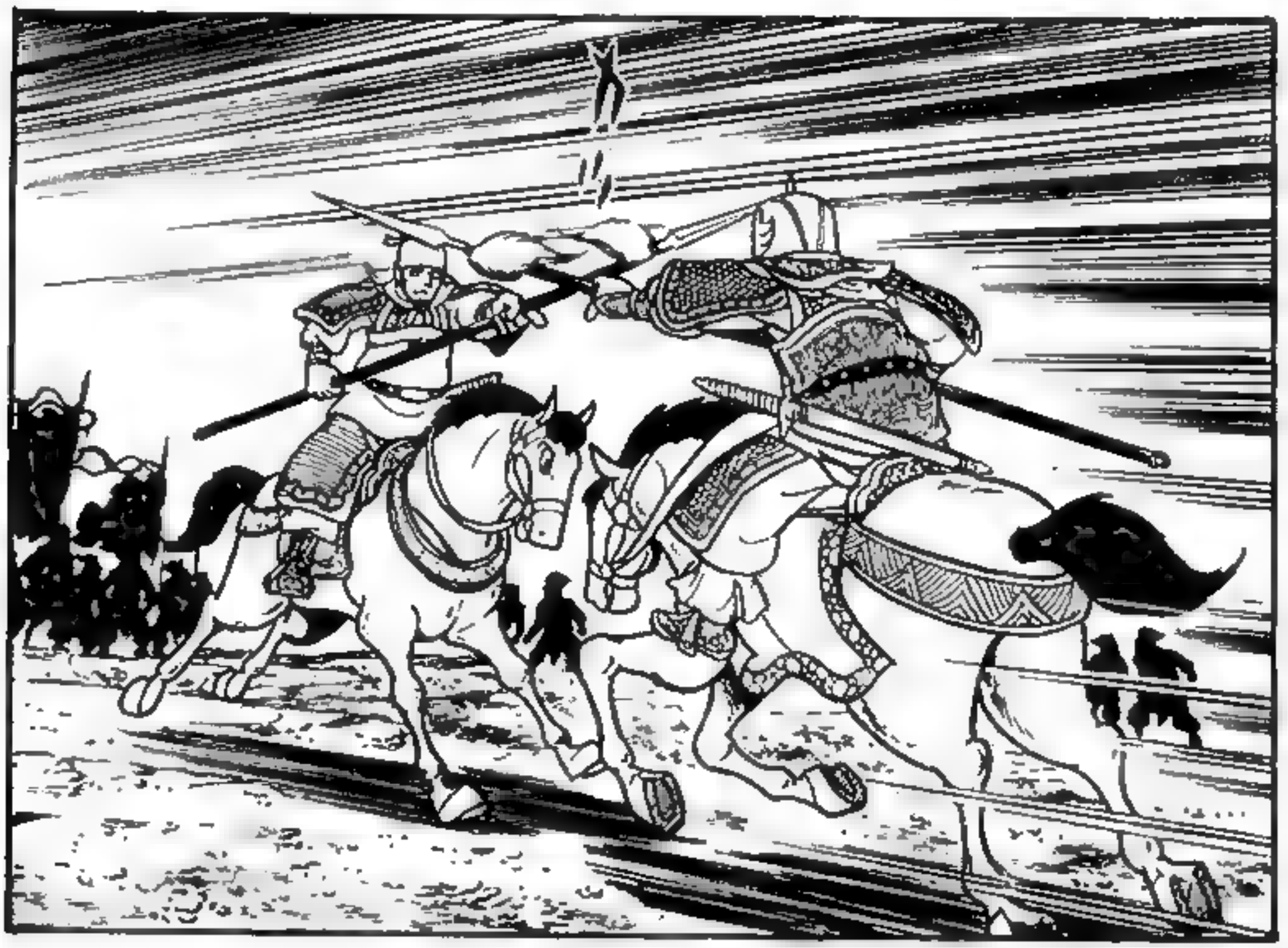
BUT AMIDST
THIS BATTLE,
ZHAO
ZILONG
BROKE
THROUGH
ENEMY LINES.

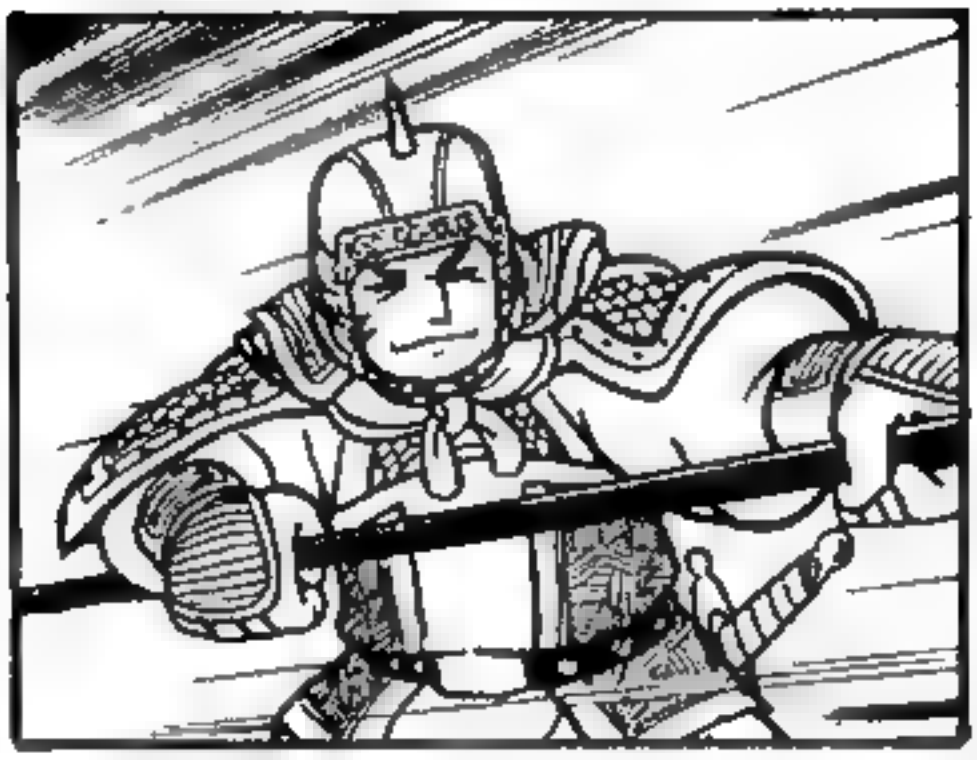


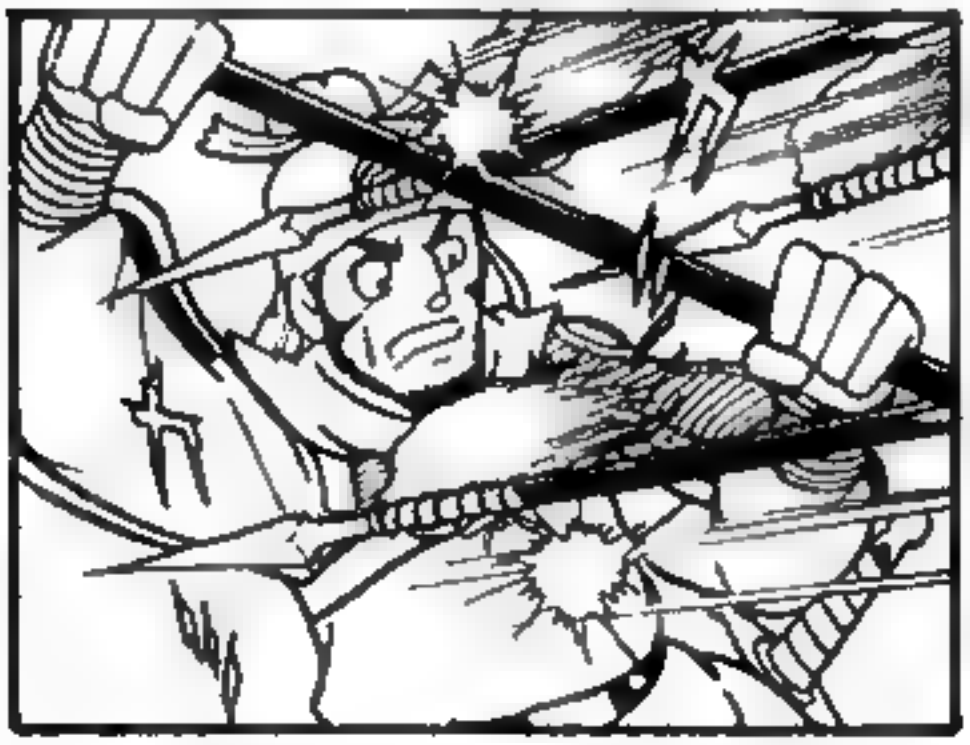

AND
LOCATED
LI DIAN

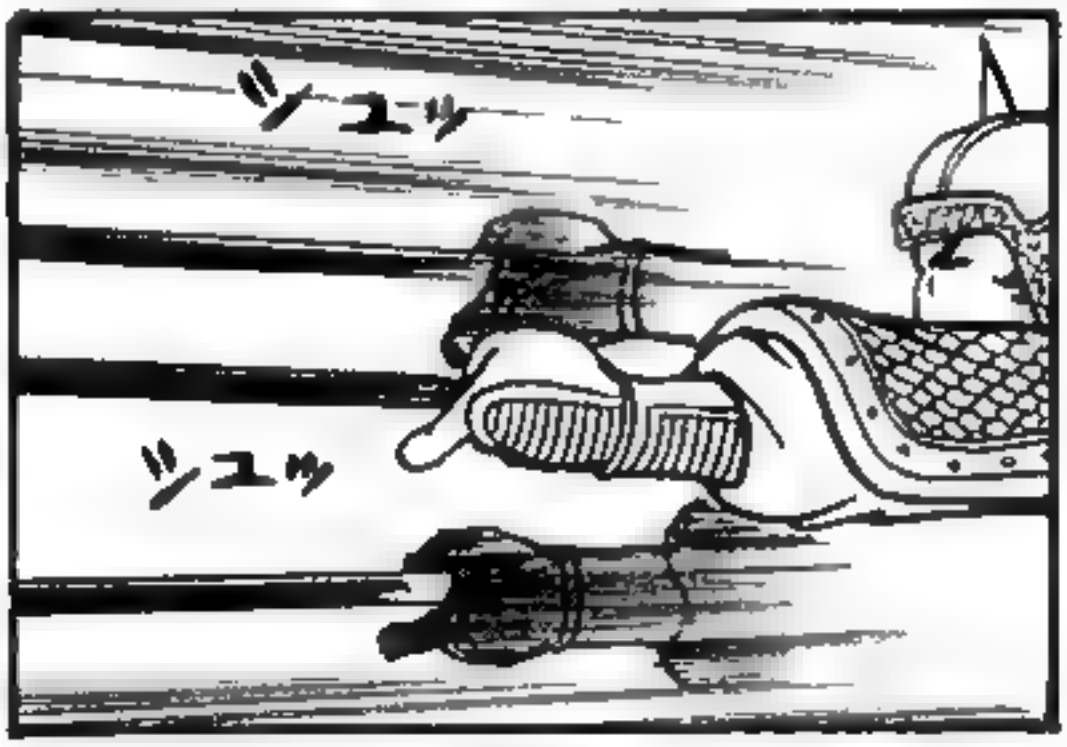
I HAVE NO COMPLAINTS.

LI DIAN! I, ZHAO YUN ZILONG, SHALL BE YOUR OPPONENT TODAY!

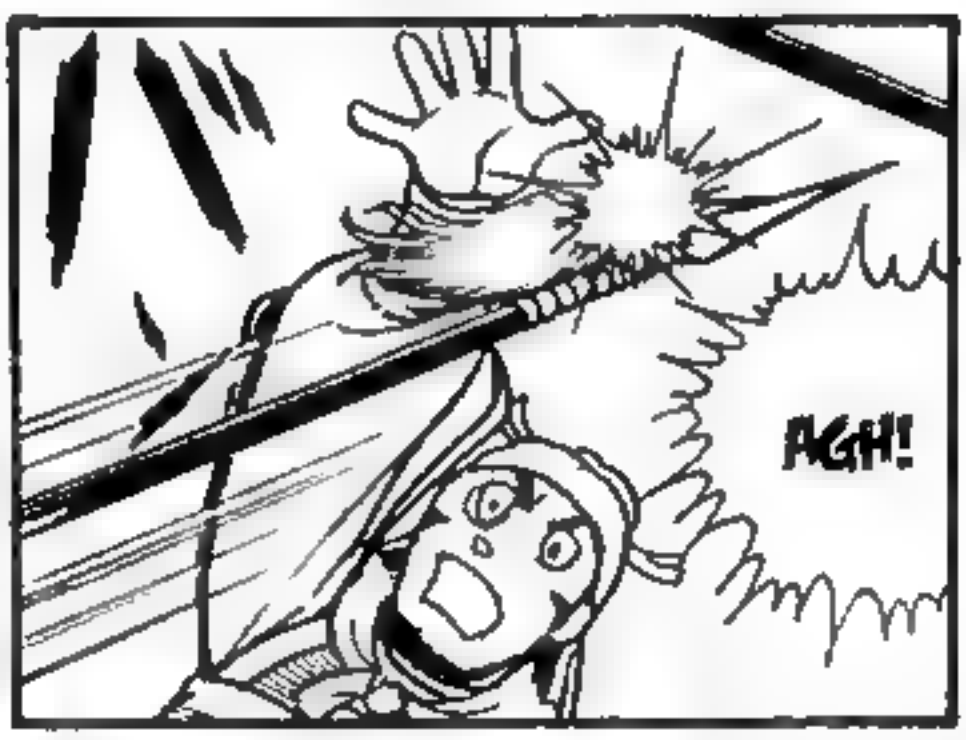




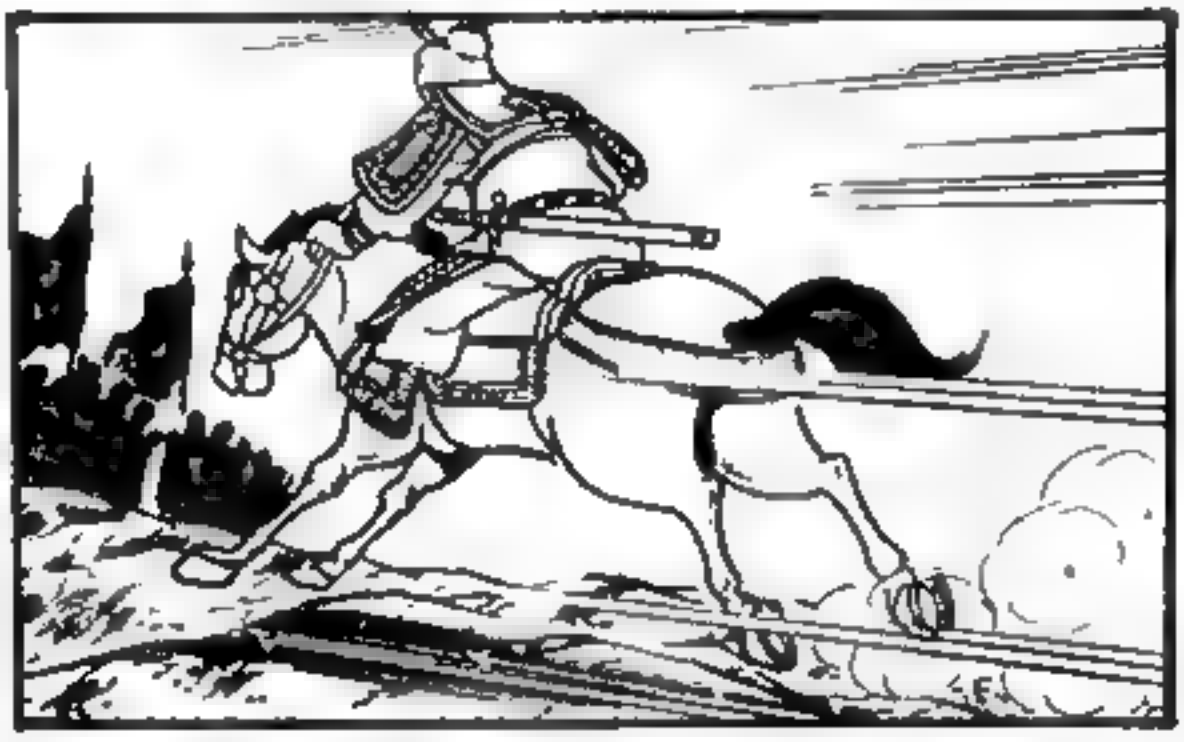



ﾐｭｯ
ﾐｭｯ

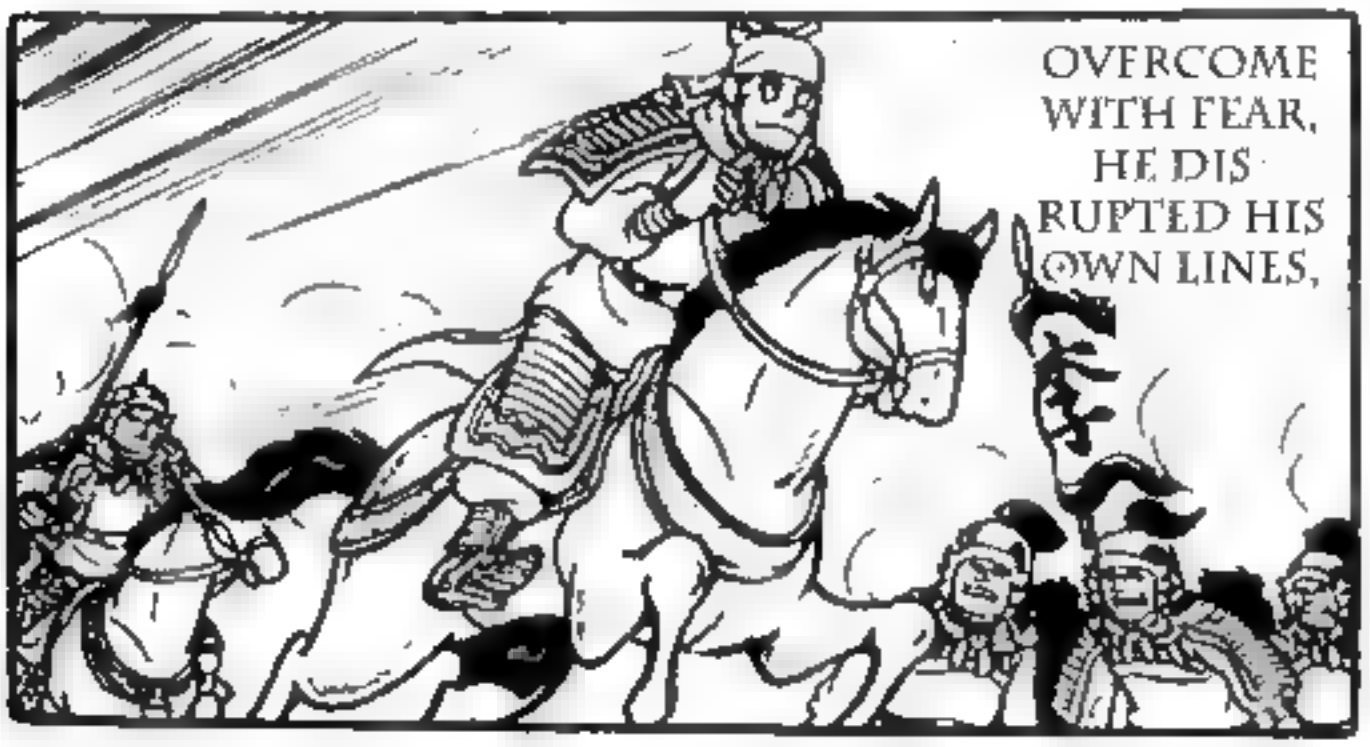
H-HE'S TOO MUCH FOR ME TO HANDLE...!


AGH!

LI DIAN! YOU DARE RUN AWAY!?

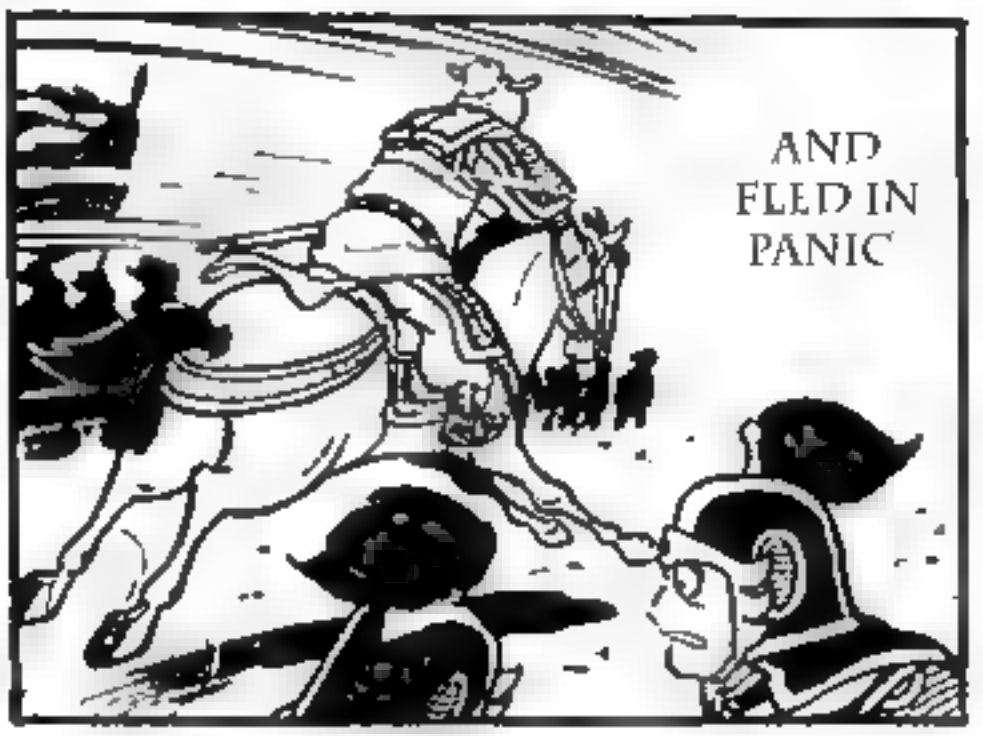


BUT LI DIAN WAS NO LONGER HIMSELF.


OVERCOME WITH FEAR, HE DISRUPTED HIS OWN LINES,

HALT RIGHT THERE!

SEEING THIS,


AND FLED IN PANIC

LI DIAN'S OWN SOLDIERS BEGAN TO RETREAT AS WELL.

WHAT!? LI DIAN'S FORCES WERE ROUTED!?

BRING LI DIAN TO ME RIGHT NOW!

IT MUST BE BECAUSE OF HIS COWARDICE!

I SHALL EXECUTE HIM TO RECOVER OUR TROOPS' LOST MORALE!

KILLING ONE OF OUR OWN GENERAL WILL ONLY GIVE THE ENEMY THE ADVANTAGE.

I AGREE. THE BATTLE HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN.

I WOULD ADVISE AGAINST THAT, COMMANDER.

MNN...

WHAT WE SHOULD DO NOW IS REARRANGE OUR BATTLE FORMATION.

FINE! SET UP THE EIGHT DOCKED GATES!

NO, I'M AFRAID I DON'T.

HAHA, AREN'T THEY QUITE IMPRESSIVE... DOES MY LORD KNOW WHAT THE ENEMY'S BATTLE FORMATION IS CALLED?

EIGHT DOCKED GATES?

THAT IS KNOWN AS THE EIGHT DOCKED GATES FORMATION.

LASTLY, COMPLETE ANNHILATION WILL COME FROM ENTERING OBSTACLES AND DEATH.

THE NAMES OF THE GATES ARE BIRTH, EXIT, EXPANSE, WOUND, FEAR, ANNIHILATION, OBSTACLE, AND DEATH. IF YOU ENTER THROUGH BIRTH, EXIT, OR EXPANSE, YOU SHALL SUCCEED WHILE INJURIES WILL RESULT FROM ENTERING WOUND, FEAR, OR ANNIHILATION.

ALTHOUGH EACH OF THE 8 GATES MAY BE SOLID, THE CENTRAL KEY-POST WHERE THE ENEMY COMMANDER LIES IS QUITE WEAK.

THEN HOW SHOULD WE ATTACK?

I'M AFRAID YOU'RE LOSING ME.

SEE THE ENEMY COMMANDER'S FLAG AT THE BACK OF THE LINES OVER THERE? THAT IS WHERE WE MUST STRIKE.

CAN THE ART OF WAR REALLY GIVE THAT MUCH FORESIGHT TO BATTLES...?

SIMPLY PUT, THE ENEMIES CAN BE THROWN INTO DISORDER IF WE ENTER BIRTH AND EXIT OUT THROUGH EXPANSE.

YES?

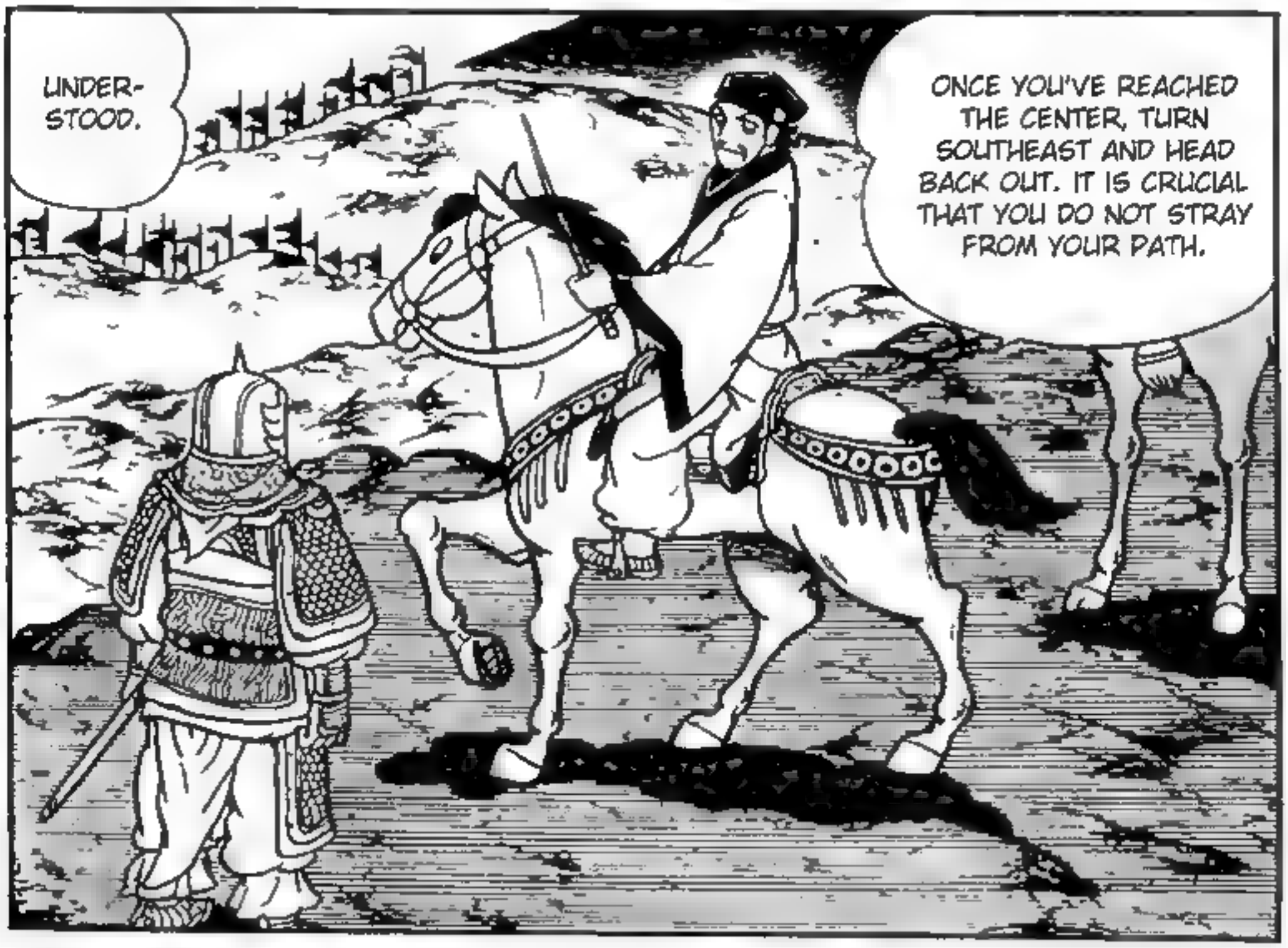
GENERAL ZHAO ZILONG!

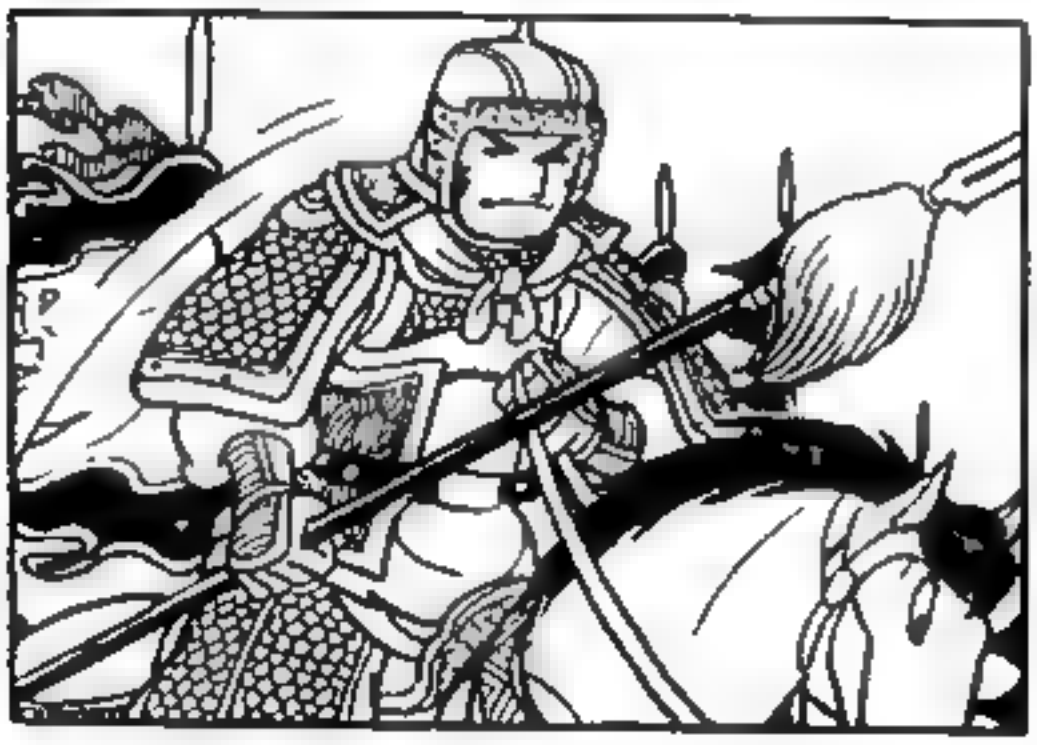
AS YOU WISH, COMMANDER.

I MUST CALL UPON YOUR ASSISTANCE ONCE MORE.

THEN I WANT YOU TO KEEP HEADING WEST.

TAKE 500 MEN AND ENTER THAT SOUTHEAST OPENING IN THE ENEMY LINES.

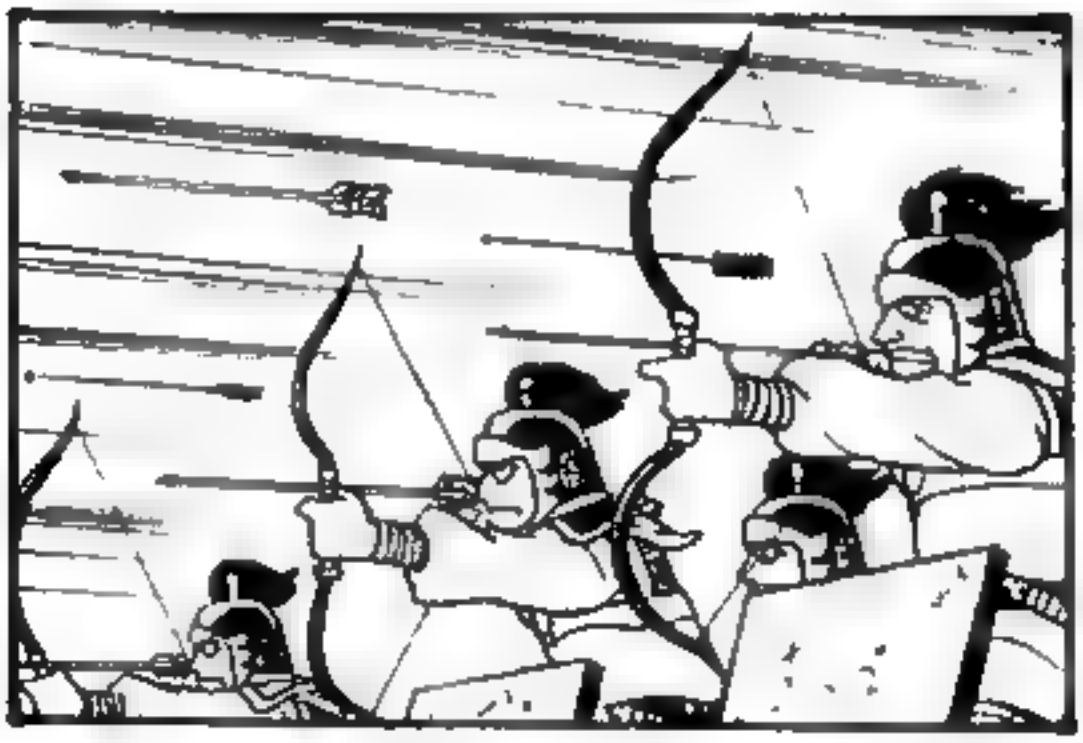

UNDER-STOOD.
ONCE YOU'VE REACHED THE CENTER, TURN SOUTHEAST AND HEAD BACK OUT. IT IS CRUCIAL THAT YOU DO NOT STRAY FROM YOUR PATH.



FOLLOW AFTER ME, MY MEN!

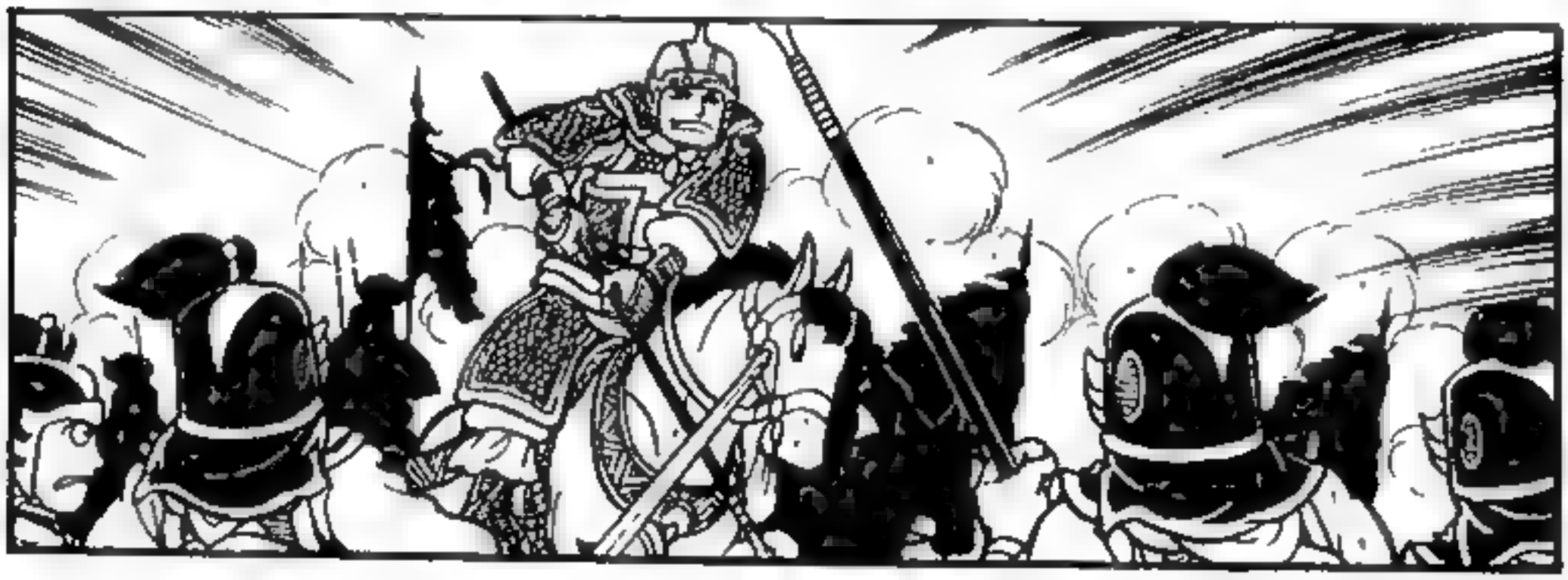
YES.

ONCE THE ENEMY FORMATION COLLAPSES, PLEASE SIGNAL OUR FORCES TO CHARGE STRAIGHT AHEAD.



IT'S LIU BE'S FORCES!

DO NOT FALTER!



NOW HEAD ONLY STRAIGHT FORWARD! KILL ONLY THOSE BLOCKING OUR PATH!

LIU BEI'S ARMY HAS ENTERED THE BIRTH GATE, COMMANDER.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

YES, SIR.

WELL, DON'T JUST SIT THERE! STOP THEM!

NOW TURN AROUND AND HEAD BACK OUT THROUGH THE EXACT SAME WAY WE CAME FROM!

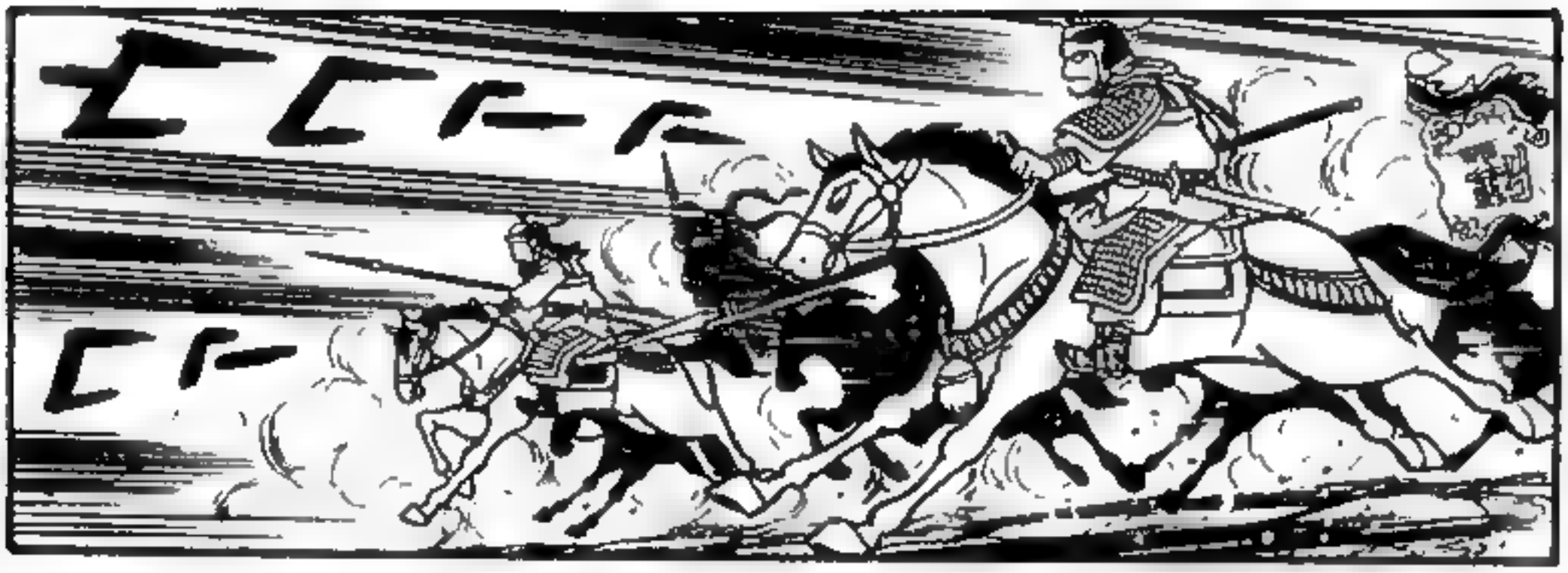
HM?

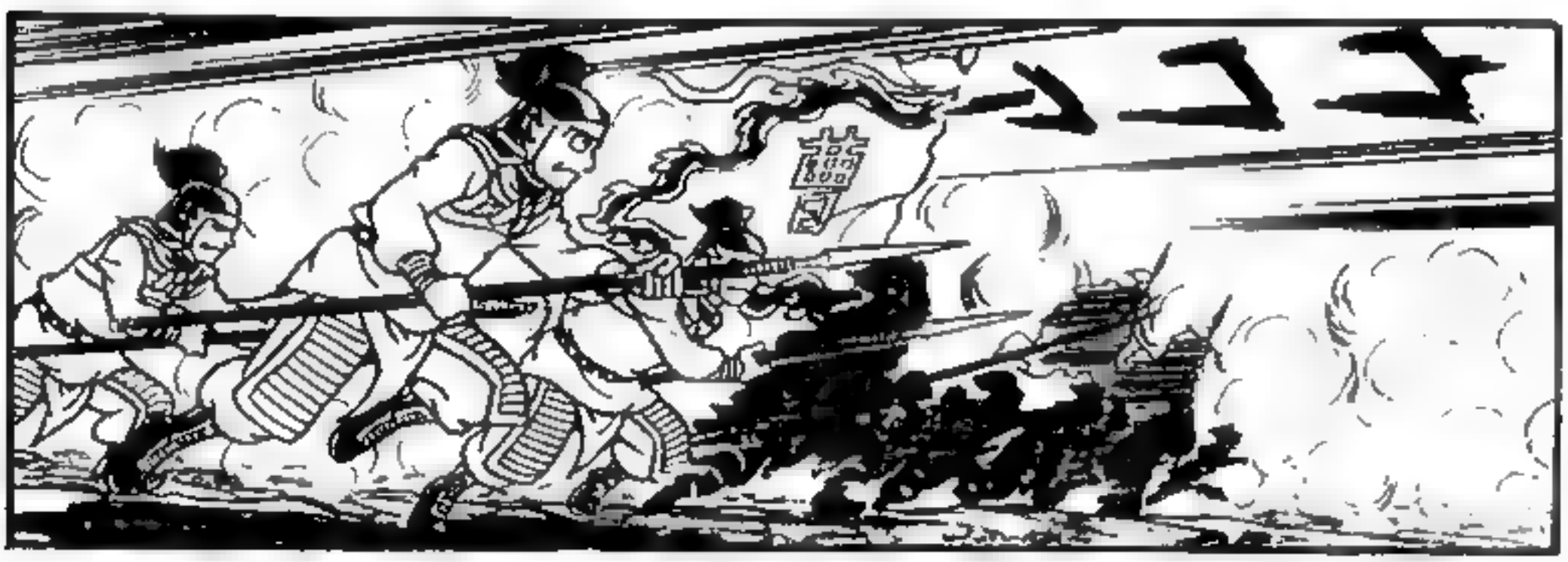
IT'S A SHAME I CAN'T STRAY FROM MY PATH. CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY FOR TODAY, CAO REN.

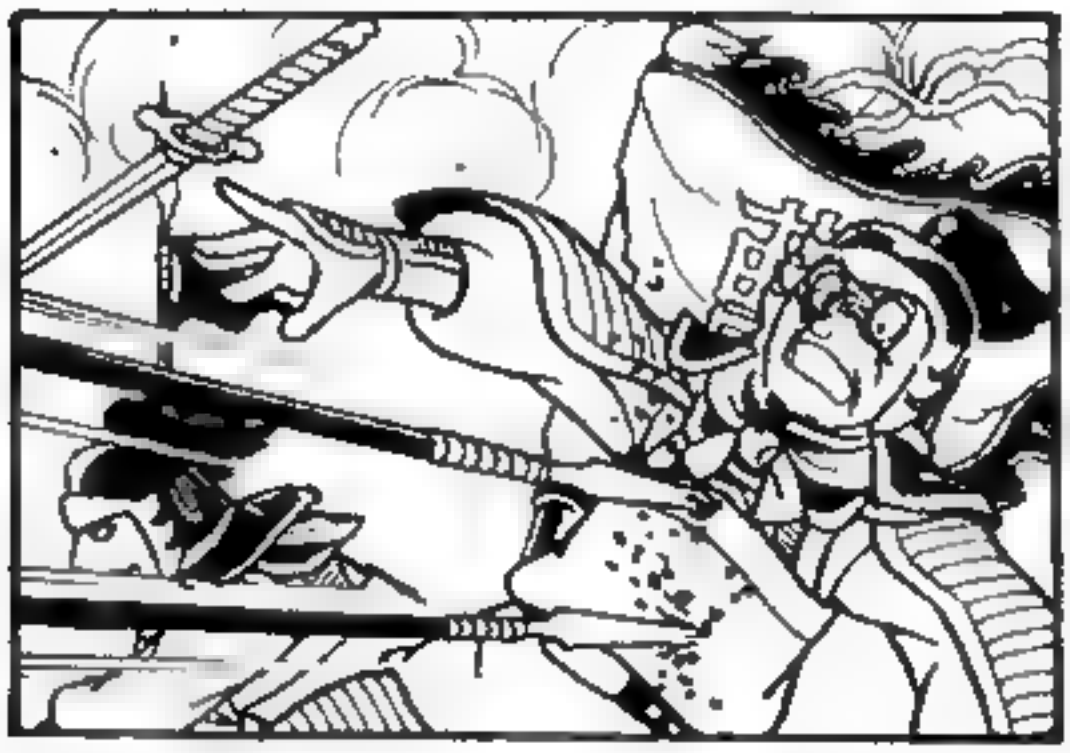
THAT MUST BE CAO REN.

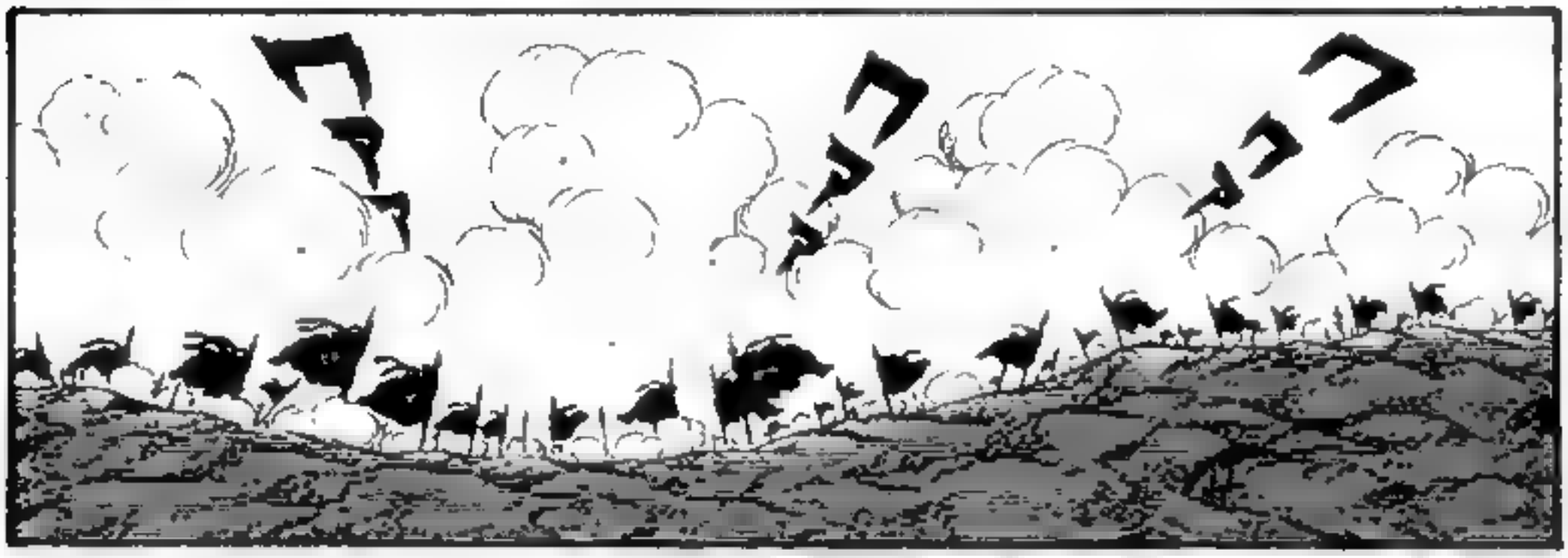
ALL SOLDIERS, CHARGE!

YES.
SEE HOW THE EIGHT DOCKED GATES ARE CRUMBLING? NOW IS OUR CHANCE, MY LORD.



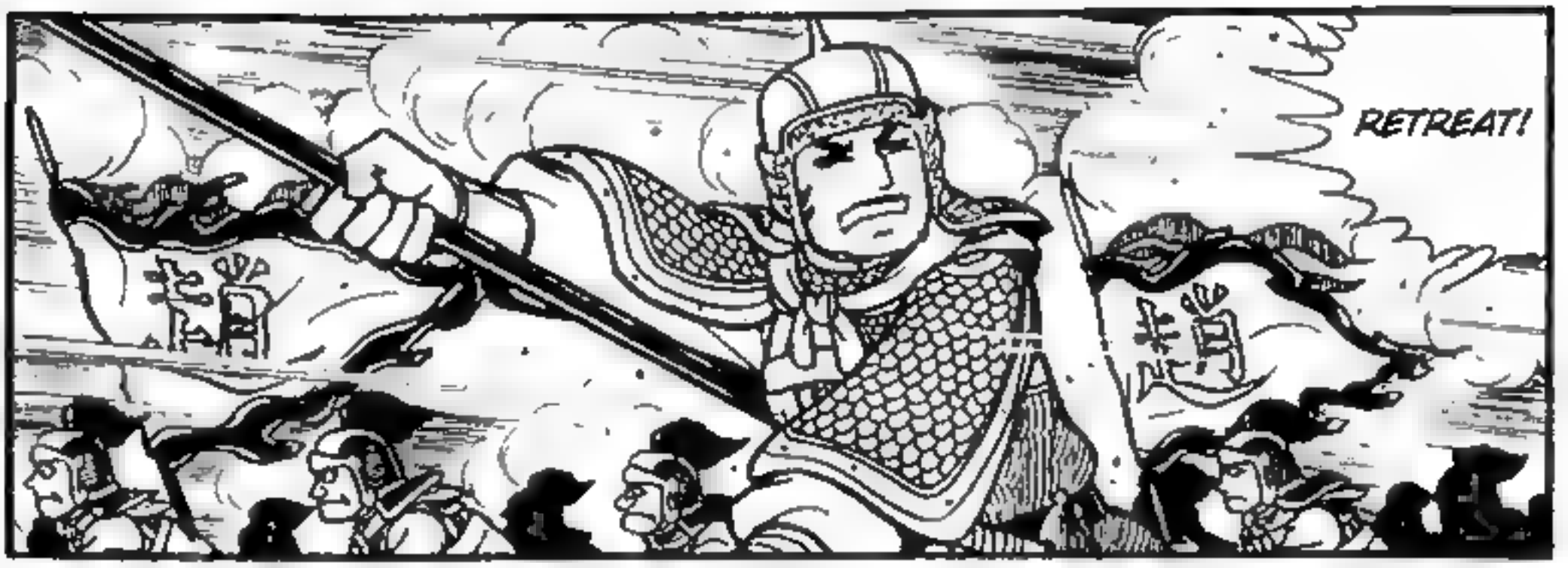


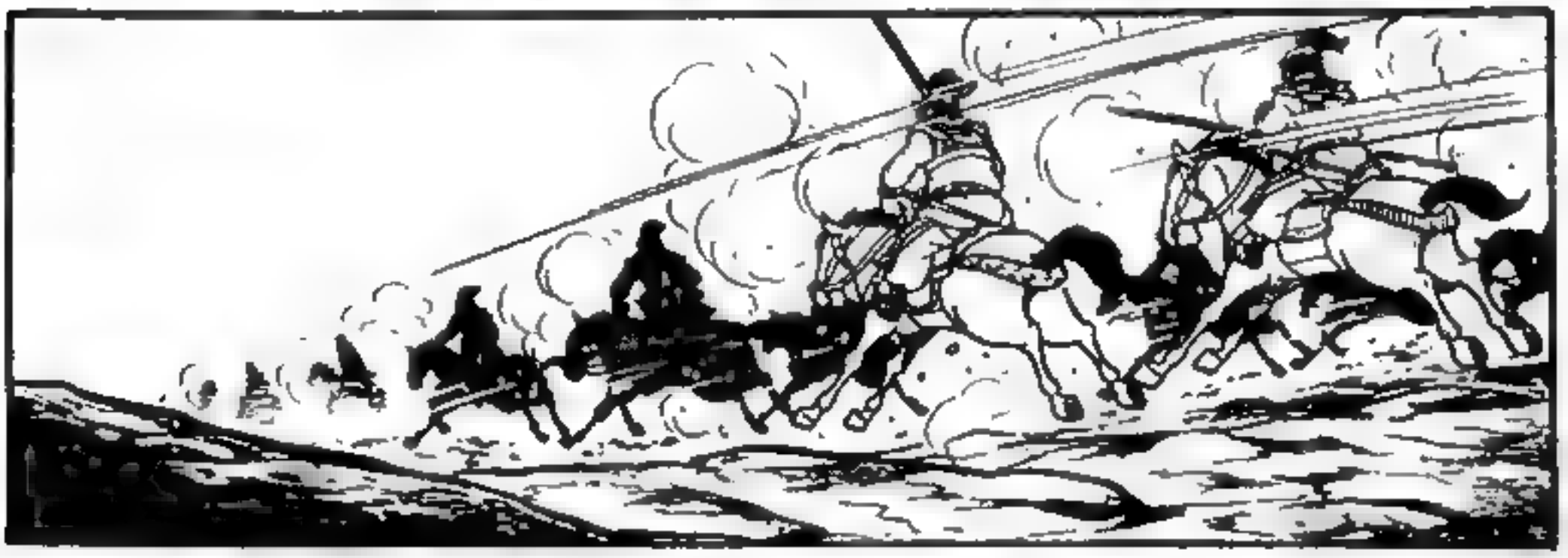




THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH. GIVE THE SIGNAL TO RETREAT.

IT'S THE RETREAT SIGNAL!


RETREAT!



THAT DOES IT!

W-WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!?

PLEASE STOP, COMMANDER. WE'RE UP AGAINST ENEMIES WHO KNOW HOW TO EASILY COUNTER THE EIGHT DOCKED GATES. DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THEY'LL FALL TO A NIGHT RAID?

A RAID! WE SHALL RAID THEIR CAMP TONIGHT!

HOW CAN WE FIGHT SUCCESS-FULLY WHEN YOU'RE SO SCARED AND FULL OF DOUBTS!?

LI DIAN! MUST YOU OBJECT AGAINST EVERY SINGLE ONE OF MY DECISIONS!?

WHAT I'M AFRAID OF IS THE ENEMY PLANNING A SNEAK ATTACK ON FANCHENG, COMMANDER.

IF YOU'RE SO SCARED OF FIGHTING THEN WHY DON'T YOU THROW YOUR SWORD AWAY AND PICK UP A PITCHFORK INSTEAD!?

ENOUGH! WE SHALL PREPARE FOR A NIGHT RAID AND THAT'S FINAL!

LOOKS LIKE OUR MORALE IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH.

IT FEELS AS IF WE'RE THE LARGER ARMY.

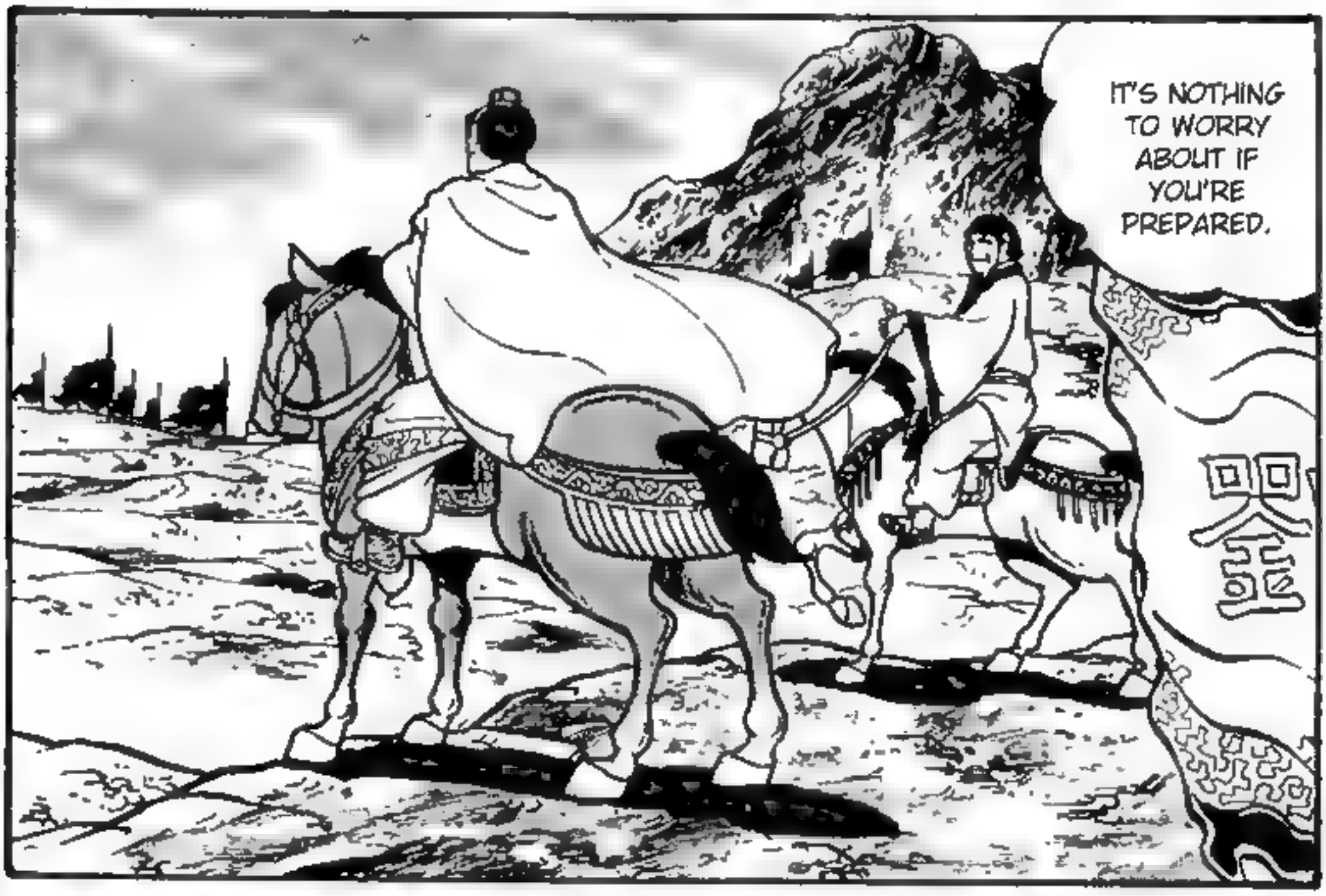
IN ANY CASE, I FEEL LIKE I NOW TRULY UNDERSTAND MASTER SHUI JING'S WORDS.

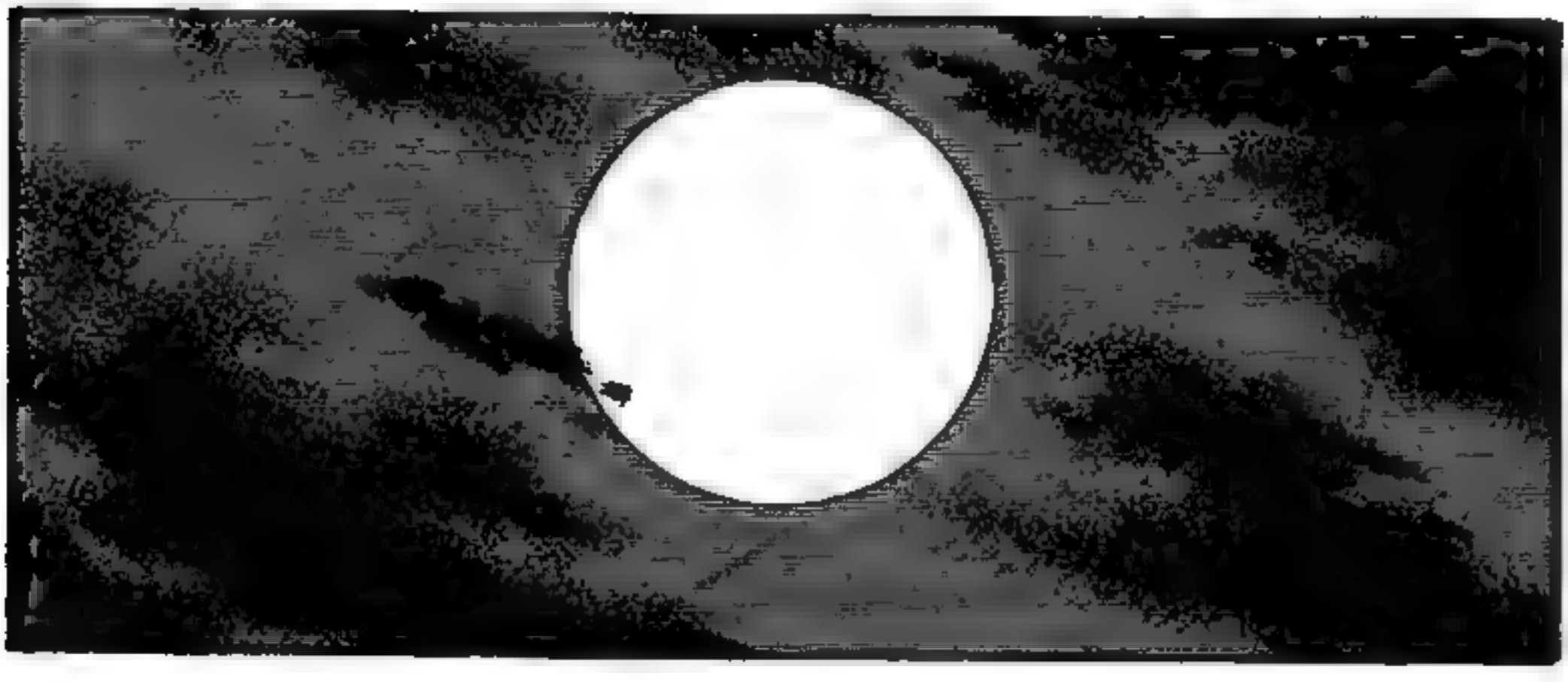
THE FIGHT'S ONLY JUST BEGUN, MY LORD.
IT WAS A SPLENDID BATTLE.

A MAN WITH FORESIGHT IS ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL...

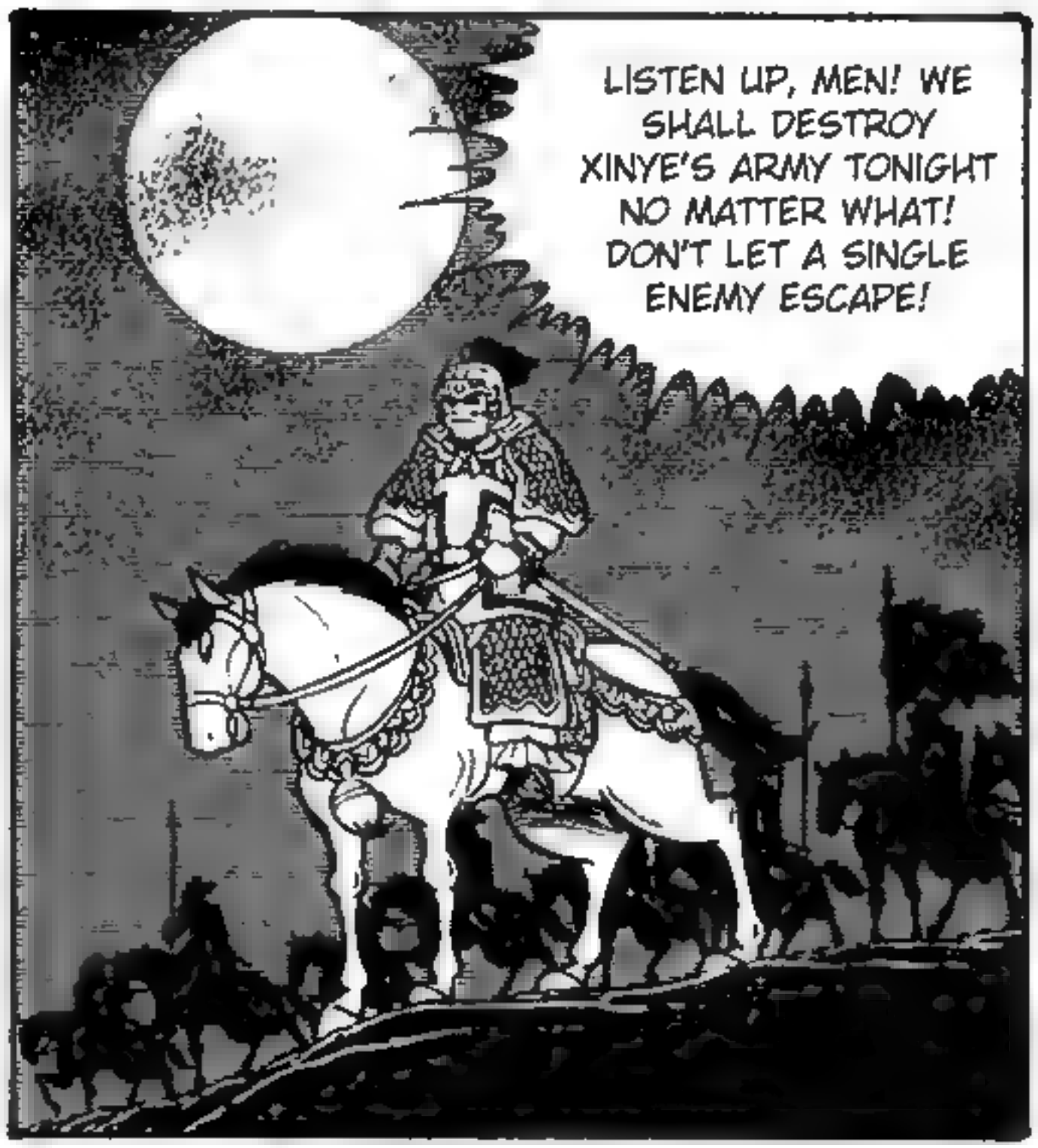
A NIGHT RAID?

CAO REN WILL MOST LIKELY ATTEMPT A RAID TONIGHT.


IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT IF YOU'RE PREPARED.



CHARGE!

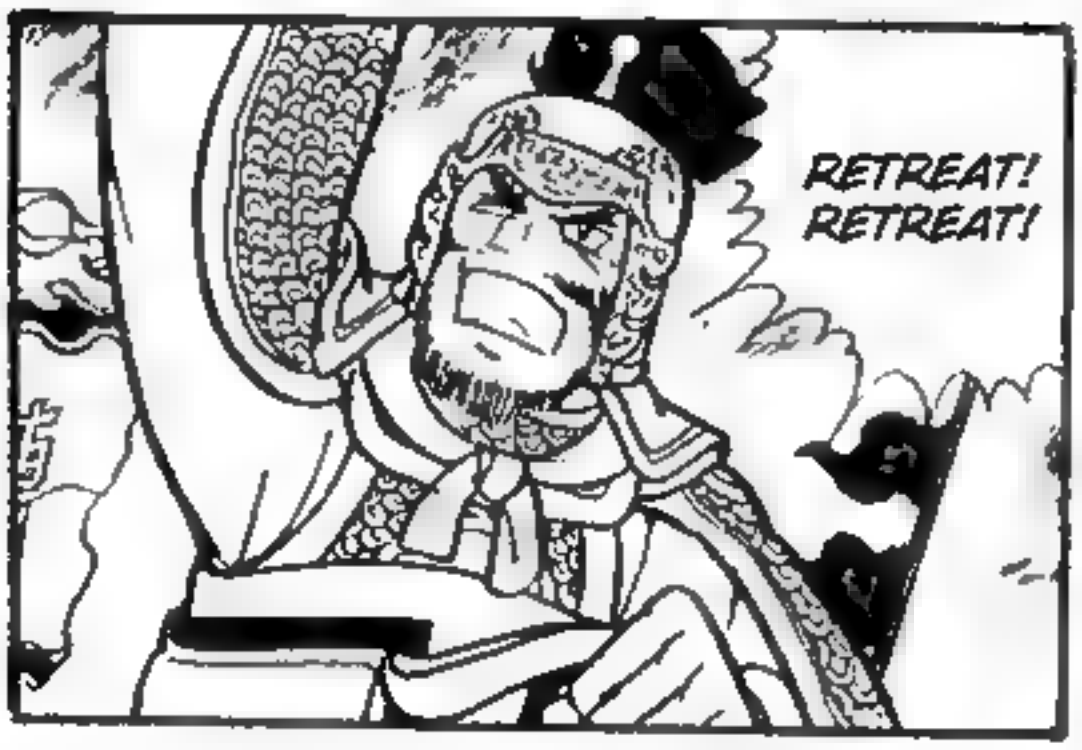

LISTEN UP, MEN! WE SHALL DESTROY XINYE'S ARMY TONIGHT NO MATTER WHAT! DON'T LET A SINGLE ENEMY ESCAPE!

HM?

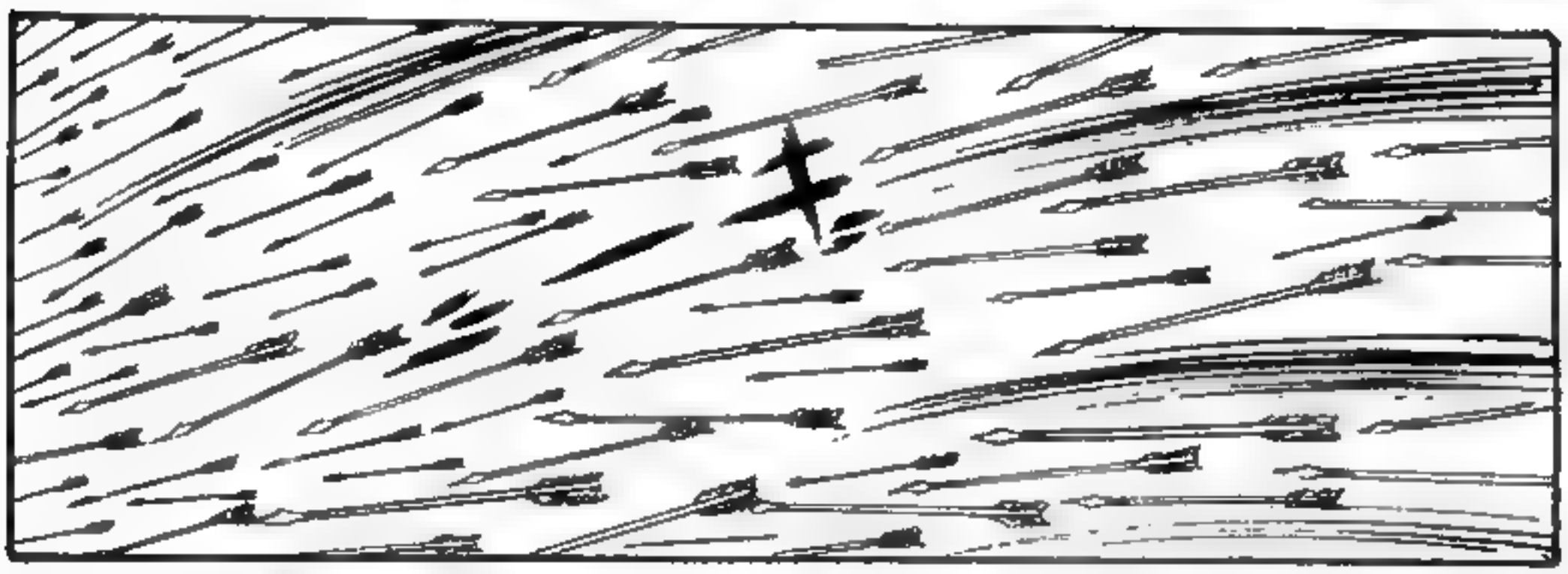
THEY'RE NOT HERE?

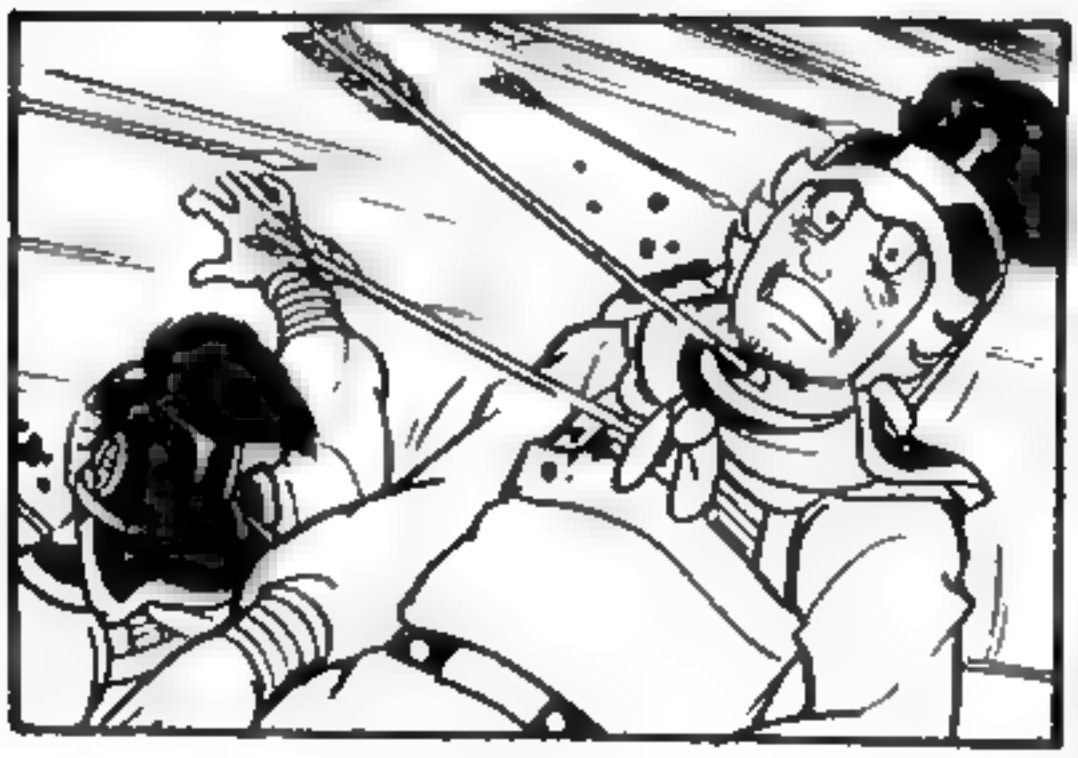
AH!

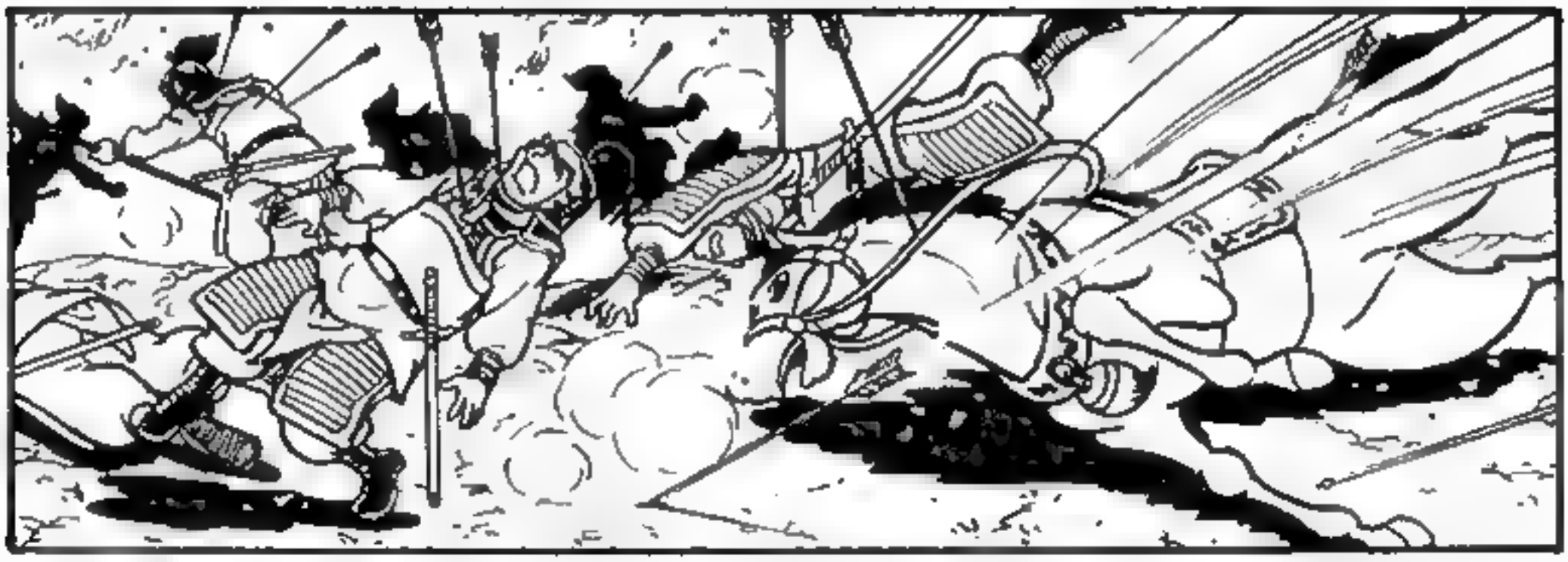
AHH!


RETREAT!
RETREAT!

DAMN!
IT'S A
TRAP!



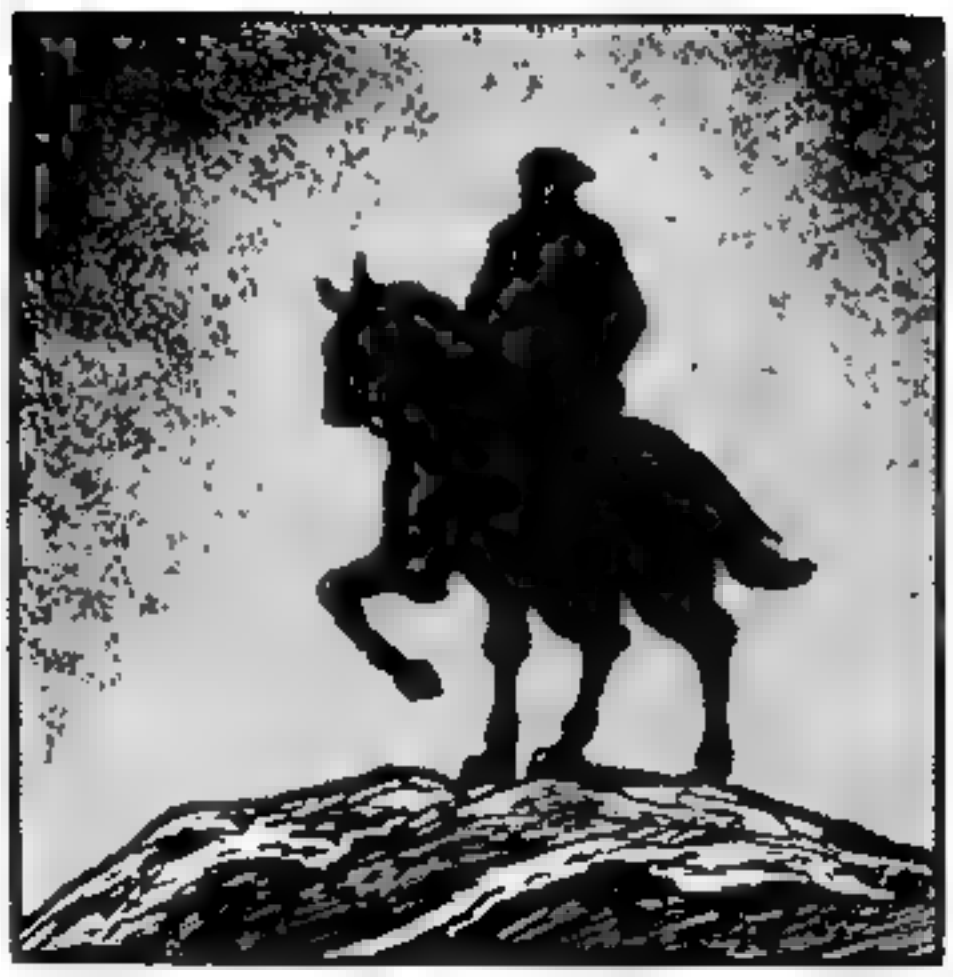


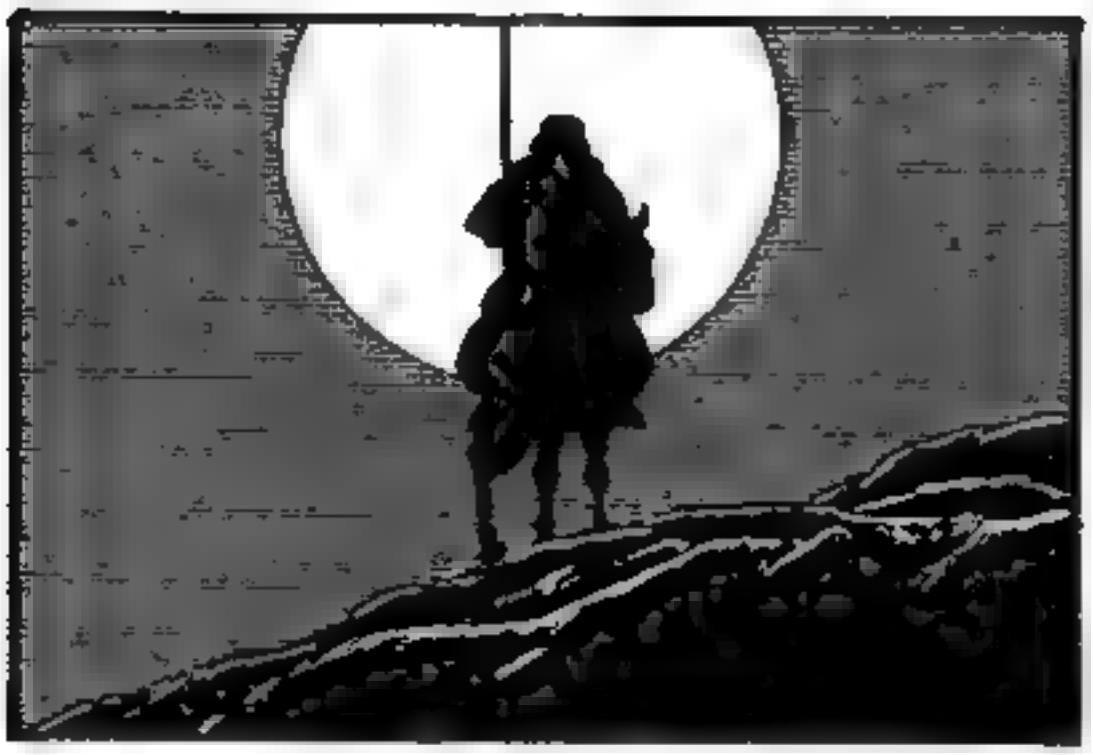


NOW DO YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN, COMMANDER? THE ENEMIES HAVE SOMEONE WELL VERSED IN THE ART OF WAR.

YOU'RE RIGHT.

WE MUST GIVE UP ON THIS BATTLE AND RETREAT TO FANCHENG RIGHT AWAY!





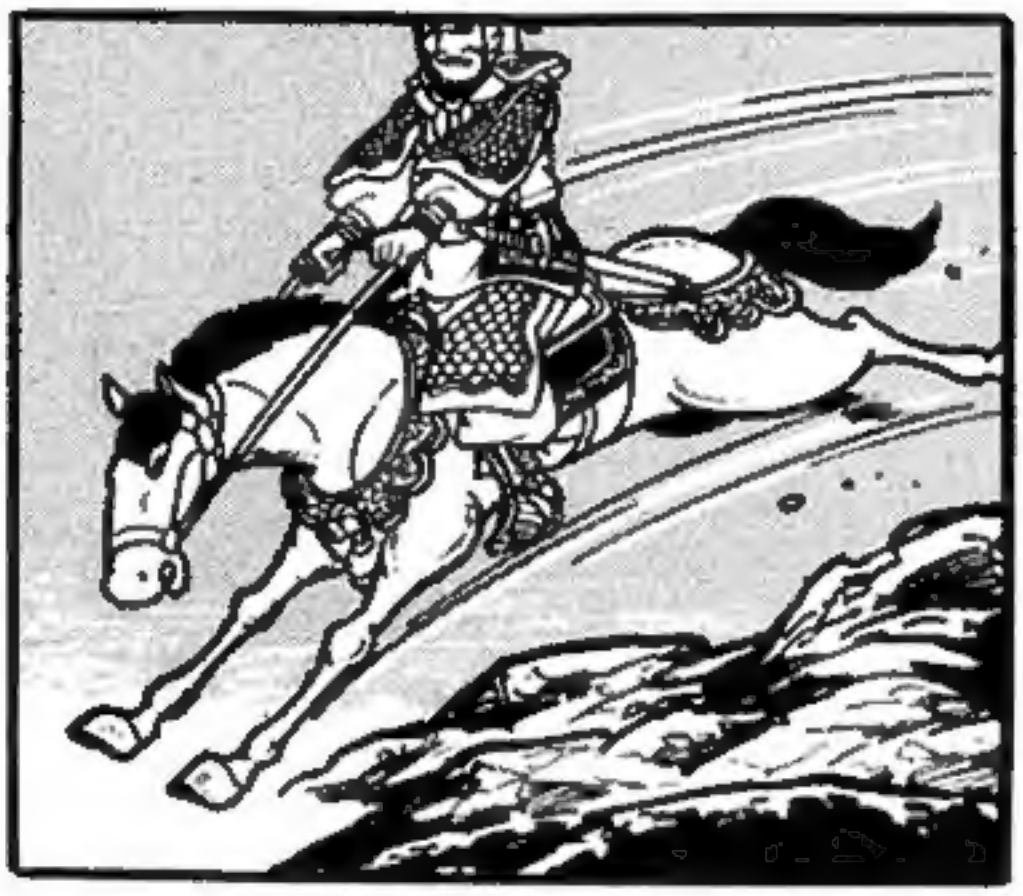
HM?

AGH!

HAHAHA, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

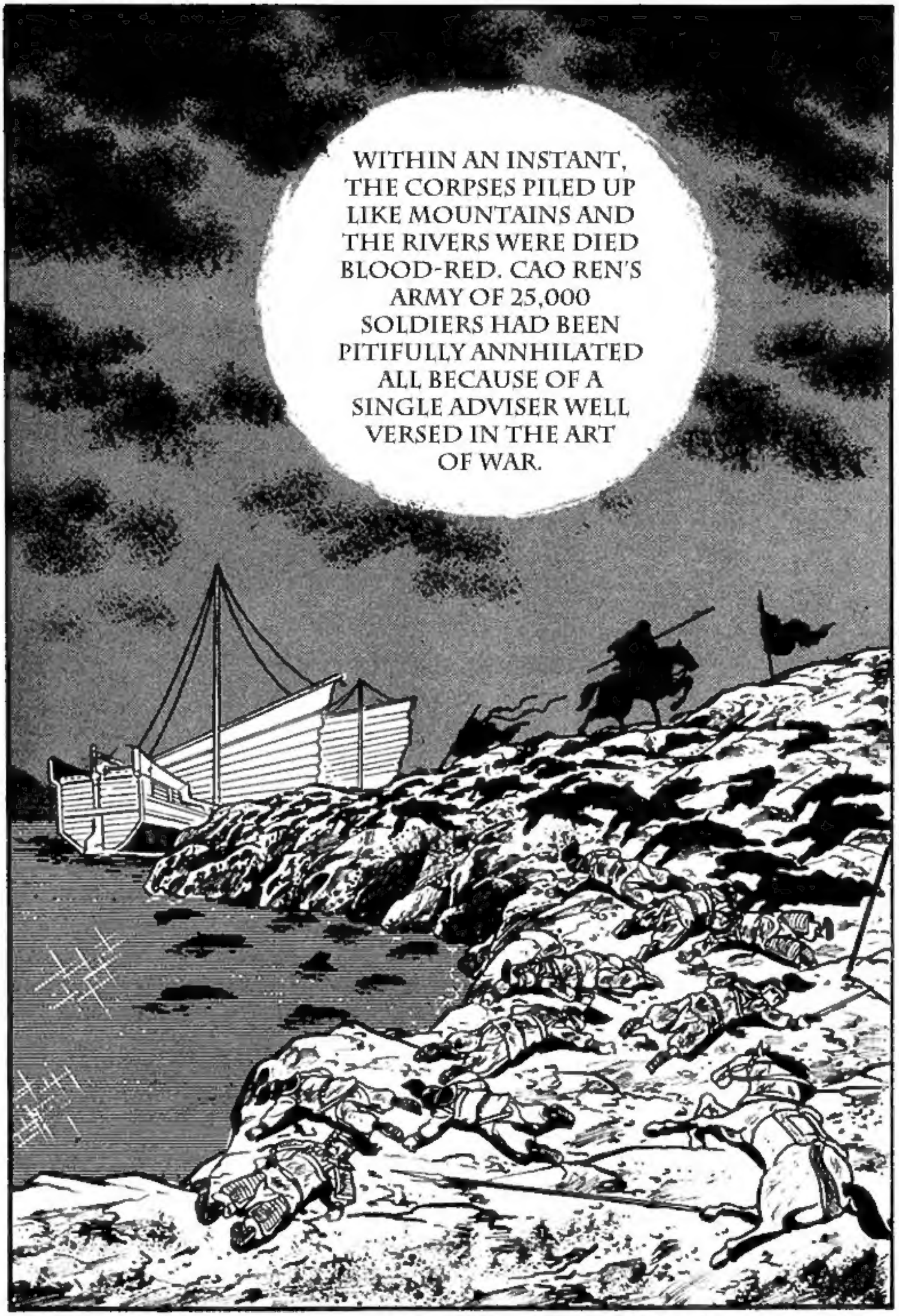
DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE ACROSS THE RIVER!

COMMANDER, WE MUST CROSS THE RIVER!



AHH!

HOW COULD THIS BE...!


WITHIN AN INSTANT, THE CORPSES PILED UP LIKE MOUNTAINS AND THE RIVERS WERE DIED BLOOD-RED. CAO REN'S ARMY OF 25,000 SOLDIERS HAD BEEN PITIFULLY ANNHILATED ALL BECAUSE OF A SINGLE ADVISER WELL VERSED IN THE ART OF WAR.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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横山 光輝

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